

# Tears for Christchurch: Australia First Imported Hate in 1788. Now We're in the "Export Business"

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Global Research, March 18, 2019

[New Matilda](#) 16 March 2019

Region: [Oceania](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*If you want to know why an Australian man massacred 50 Muslims in a mosque in New Zealand yesterday afternoon, then you need to understand a little bit about our nation's dark past and in particular the quality of our present leadership. Chris Graham explains.*

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Getting your head around an unspeakable tragedy like that which occurred in Christchurch yesterday is no easy thing. It's hard to fathom the level of hate that underpins such a heinous act.

Ordinarily when an event like this occurs, there's a rush from political leaders to offer condolences. But there's also a clamour to avoid political discussion. When terrible things like this happen, *'now is not the time for debate. Now is the time for grieving'*.

In Australia, on this occasion, that clamour hasn't occurred. I think that's in part because the victims are Muslim and most Australians don't - and won't - identify with their grieving. There's no 'profile pic filter' in support of the Muslims of Christchurch flooding Facebook today.

I think it's also in part because Muslim leaders themselves - young and old - are already leading the calls for a national discussion, although it's not like they haven't been doing that for a long time. Journalist Osman Faruqi probably put it best.

I feel so sad. We begged you to stop amplifying and normalising hatred and racism. But you told us we were 'politically correct' and 'freedom of speech' was more important.

The more you gave the far-right a platform, the more powerful they got. We begged you.

— Osman Faruqi (@oz\_f) [March 15, 2019](#)

There are several distinctly separate conversations that must go on, across two countries, and there's a deep, twisted irony in at least one of them.

If New Zealand leaders respond the way Australian leaders have in the past, then there *will* be a debate centred around immigration. They might come to the conclusion that no Muslim has ever come to their shores and massacred 49 people. But an Australian has, and by

Australian logic, New Zealanders should be calling for an immigration ban... on Australians.

The other discussion – the more pressing one – is on our own shores. What Muslim leaders – and many of the rest of us – want to discuss is how we got to this point, and how we get back from here. That will require an honest assessment of this nation’s history – not just our treatment of Muslims, but of people of colour generally – and in particular it requires a frank discussion about the people who have led us here, and still lead us today. It’s only then can we even start to understand what created a man like **Brendon Tarrant**.

This analysis piece is an attempt to contribute to that process.

### **Aussie racism and our leaders**

When **John Howard**, our Prime Minister from 1996 until 2007, first joined the Liberal Party in the 1950s, slavery of Aboriginal people was common in Australia, although there is no official recognition of this in our museums or libraries.

Aboriginal children were taken from their families, placed into ‘homes’ and then forced into labour. Their wages and savings were held in ‘trust’ by government, and then stolen. As late as 1986 governments were still refusing to pay Aboriginal workers the same wages as everyone else. When a court finally ordered equal pay, the Queensland Government increased the wage level, then sacked the requisite number of black workers to ensure there was no impact on the bottom line.

As this occurred, John Howard had already been in parliament a decade and a half and had climbed to the ranks of leader of the federal Liberal Party. He said nothing in defence of Aboriginal people, nor did he call to heel his party colleague, Queensland **Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen**.

Two years later, as Opposition leader, he called for Asian immigration to Australia to be reduced. The policy was called, ‘One Australia’.

In 1998, Howard campaigned on tax reform and faced an electoral wipeout. He won the election, but not the popular vote. By 2001, he’d learnt his lesson – his election slogan was ‘We’ll decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they come’. The ‘Tampa election’ – where Howard refused to process asylum seekers who had sunk at sea and been picked up by the a passing ship – delivered a significant victory for the Liberals, and most notably, changed the political landscape in Australia.

Howard’s overt xenophobia was welcomed by a majority of voters.

By 2005, Howard was still Prime Minister when thousands of white Australians descended on Sydney’s famous Cronulla beach to riot and beat brown people – to ‘take back our beaches’, as organisers put it.

The ‘protest’ had been driven in large part by Sydney shock jock Alan Jones, a mate of Howard’s. Despite the violence, and the scale of it, Howard refused to accept Australia had a problem with racism.



June 21, 2007: Prime Minister John Howard and Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough announce the

## Northern Territory intervention.

Two years later, he sent the Australian Army into Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory on the false pretext that it was awash with paedophile rings. The story was part of a racist campaign [concocted by our national broadcaster, the ABC](#), and Howard and his party tried to exploit it at the next federal election. Self-harm and attempt suicide rates among the NT's Aboriginal population more than quadrupled, anaemia rates in Aboriginal children sky-rocketed, and the government later conceded that the practice of restricting access to welfare funds caused widespread starvation among the Aboriginal population.

Only black people were subject to these laws.

When **Dr James Anaya** from the United Nations toured the country in 2009, he labelled the NT intervention policy - which was now being run by Labor - as "racist". He was described as an ["armchair critic"](#) by Australia's future Prime Minister, **Tony Abbott**, a man who believes climate change is "crap", whose main election slogan in 2013 was "stop the boats" - a reference to mainly brown people seeking asylum - and who thought that Aboriginal people living in grinding state-engineered poverty were making ["lifestyle choices"](#).

Abbott was ultimately rolled as Prime Minister, and eventually succeeded by our current leader, **Scott Morrison**, the man who as Abbott's immigration minister set up the indefinite detention of refugees in camps on Manus and Nauru. Documents [leaked at the time](#) revealed that Morrison deliberately constructed the detention system to be as punitive as possible, to act as a deterrent.

There are still hundreds of men and women living this 'deterrence' today, trapped on these islands. This policy has also been condemned by the United Nations and the international community.

Yesterday Morrison was quick to empathise with New Zealand, and to [condemn comments by his parliamentary colleague, Fraser Anning](#), who claimed the cause of the massacre was New Zealand's immigration policy. Morrison called Anning's comments "disgusting".

They *are* disgusting - indeed *most* things Anning says are, including this [recent speech calling for a 'Final Solution'](#) to Australia's 'immigration problem'. But of all the people in Australia in a position to condemn it, our Prime Minister is not one of them.



Fraser Anning, of course, was previously part of One Nation, a deeply racist political party headed by **Pauline Hanson**. For her part, Hanson was previously a member of Scott Morrison's Liberals. She entered the parliamentary chamber last year dressed in a burka, a stunt designed to [highlight her opposition](#) to Muslim immigration.

In her maiden speech to parliament in 1996, she complained Australia was being swamped by Asians. In her return to parliament two decades later, she claimed Australia was now being ["swamped by Muslims"](#). And just to clear that up, about two-thirds of Australians today were born here and identify their heritage as white, and Islam doesn't even rank in the top five religions in the country, [according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

Recently, amid a major political revival of her party, Hanson chose Mark Latham as her lead candidate in next week's NSW state election. Latham is the former leader of the Labor Party,

Australia's other major political force. Earlier this week, Latham called for Aboriginal people to be DNA tested before they're allowed to claim social welfare. In 2015, he told media western Sydney had a "[Muslim problem](#)". In 2017, he argued it was pointless being "nice to Muslims" to get them to tip off police about future terrorist attacks.

Latham is expected to easily win a seat in the NSW Parliament next weekend.

Those on the 'left' in Australia often claim that the Labor Party is much more moderate than the Liberals. Here's former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd [describing people seeking asylum](#) as "illegal immigrants". And here's his predecessor, Julia Gillard, [blaming Aboriginal people](#) for their own poverty.

Someone who might also return to the parliamentary benches at the upcoming federal election is Jacqui Lambie a former Senator with the Palmer United Party, another of Australia's fringe-right parties.

Boosted by the media, Lambie reached folk-hero status during her term in office for being known as a 'plain talker'. Here's Lambie 'talking plainly' on television about the problems with 'Shari Law'.

If you can't stomach the clip - or more to the point, you simply can't understand it - you can read a full transcript [here](#). Or here's a brief excerpt. Lambie is asked exactly what she thinks Sharia Law is: "'Shari, Shari law, um, you know, to me it's, um, it's, ah, it obviously involves terrorism. It, it, it involves a, um, a power that, um, is not a healthy power.'" Those are the exact words of a popularly elected Australian leader.

**Cory Bernardi**, another former member of the Liberals and at one time on the frontbench, has long been a vocal opponent of Muslims and Islam. He still serves in parliament as an independent, and last year described Halal certifiers in Australia as "cockroaches" after waging a failed campaign against them for four years, which included a Senate inquiry that [found, unsurprisingly, no links](#) to terrorism.

One of the more entertaining moments of his campaign was during an interview with ABC's Four Corners program, where he tried to argue there were financial links between halal certifiers and 'terrorist groups' like Hamas, the governing party in Palestine's Gaza City.

"Hamas itself is not a proscribed terrorist organisation in this country," the journalist points out. Bernardi stares back at the camera for a moment, gulps, and then replies: "Well, there you go."

Bernardi's anti-Muslim rhetoric has routinely been given a wide airing in media, under the pretense of 'balance'. But here he is 'doing it for himself' on his own website, in a piece entitled, ['Words are not enough'](#). He rails against the 2017 terrorist attacks in Manchester, which claimed the lives of 23 people, and ends by saying, "Enough is enough. If the Muslim community will not stamp out this evil in their midst we must take the lead. Our institutions are designed to protect our citizens and our national interest. It's about time we did what is necessary to make them effective."

Notably, Bernardi's response to the slaughter of 49 Muslims by a white Australian male drew a much more muted reaction - a single 13-word tweet.

In 2013, Bernardi used that same term – “disgusting”- but added “abhorrent” to describe proposed Greens’ legislation on same-sex marriage. It would lead to bestiality, he argued.

### **Who boosts them?**

That’s just a small fraction of the recent Australian leadership – there’s simply too many to mention, like Wilson Tuckey, known widely in politics by his nickname ‘Iron Bar’, which he got for flogging an Aboriginal man on the floor of an outback pub; or the faceless Labor left figure who described the job of being Aboriginal affairs minister as akin to being the [‘toilet cleaner on the Titanic’](#). Or former One Nation politician David Oldfield, who thinks Aboriginal culture – the oldest on earth – [should have died out in the Stone Age](#).

But it does give you some idea of the climate in which this country conducts its affairs, which is one of fear and loathing of ‘the other’ – of anyone who is not white.

Our population is easily exploited by this craven political cynicism. That is undeniable. But the politicians and leaders can’t do it without the assistance of our media, and on that front, there’s no shortage of willing participants.

The Daily Mail has devoted huge quantities of space today to the Christchurch attacks. Sure, wholesale slaughter may be terribly sad, but there’s clicks to be had and money to be made.

If you search the word “Muslim” on the Daily Mail home page, then manage to scroll past the 79 stories they’ve already filed on the tragedy, you’ll get to the Daily Mail’s [real coverage of Islam](#), which is a catalogue of some of the most extreme bigotry and Islamophobia in Australian media history.

Go to the Daily Telegraph or the Herald Sun and google ‘African gangs’ or ‘Lebanese gangs’. Or read [this story by Michael Brull](#), which documents 2,891 Murdoch stories trashing Islam in a single year.

Read this [fake news story](#) from Fairfax about how the country NSW town of Bourke – home to a substantial number of Aboriginal residents – is the most dangerous place on earth.

Then there’s the commentariat. On any given day, there’s no shortage of reams of copy from ultra-conservative mainstream columnists demanding the same rights they expect as citizens be denied people of the Islamic faith. Or Aboriginal people.

Go to google and search on the phrase ‘Sunrise’ and ‘Aboriginal’. What you’ll find is [deep ignorance and bigotry](#) repackaged as entertainment, then presented as ‘balanced debate’.

Earlier this year, our media hosted another of those [‘balanced debates’](#) about ‘Australia Day’, as it does every year (we still celebrate our national day on the date marking the arrival of the British and the commencement of two centuries of slaughter and dispossession of the First Australians). Panellist Kerriane Kennerly – an Australian television icon – came to the conclusion that people protesting Australia Day needed to get off their arse and head out bush to stop Aboriginal kids and women being raped.

In 2017, ABC journalist Yassmin Abdel-Magied – a Muslim woman – was hounded out of the country by media and politicians for having the gall to mention our history of slaughter on Anzac Day, a date reserved for the ‘commemoration’ of our proud involvement in virtually every global conflict since Federation. To us, solemn reflection is a public holiday where we

get drunk and gamble, and don't mention the wars fought on our own soil.

Arch conservative News Limited columnist Andrew Bolt described Abdel-Magied as a "[Muslim apologist](#)". And here's a tweet from Queensland Liberal-National politician George Christensen - a warrior for free speech - calling for Abdel Magied's sacking and "self-deportation". It got [enthusiastic coverage](#) in mainstream media.

Yasmin should no longer on the public broadcaster's tax-funded payroll. Self-deportation should also be considered. <https://t.co/xqs7lLx2xC>

— George Christensen (@GChristensenMP) [April 25, 2017](#)

Without a hint of irony, this was Christensen's social media response to the Christchurch slaughter.

It's worth noting, two years earlier, Christensen was the guest speaker at a rally staged by Reclaim Australia - a now defunct group with links to neo-Nazis - in which he declared Australia was at war with radical Islam. That got major media coverage as well. Outrage as clicks is big business.

Prior to Abdel-Magied, we hounded an Aboriginal football star, Adam Goodes, out of the game after he threw an imaginary spear at a section of the crowd that was mercilessly booing him for having a young girl ejected from an earlier game for calling him an "ape". And before that, despite our national obsession with sport, we celebrated when an Aboriginal boxer Anthony Mundine was knocked out in a world title fight. It's almost certainly the first time in Australian media history that publishers celebrated a significant sporting loss.

### **So where to from here?**

Australia, as a nation, hasn't so much lost our way, as we never really found it. Our history is one of slaughter, but it's also one of denial of that slaughter.

When Anders Behring Breivik massacred 76 people in Norway in 2011 - a person whom Brenton Tarrant listed in his rambling, unhinged 73-page manifesto as his "true inspiration" - Breivik praised Australian conservatives like Keith Windschuttle, an historian who flatly denied that significant massacres occurred in Tasmania in the 1800s.

Breivik also praised our former PM, John Howard, along with Catholic Cardinal George Pell, who was this week sentenced to jail for raping a choir boy, and sexually assaulting another. John Howard wrote him a [glowing character reference](#) for his court appearance.

Like Breivik's manifesto, Tarrant's is also very extreme and mirrors, in large part, the views of people like Blair Cottrell, Shermom Burgess and Neil Erikson, three of the more prominent white supremacists in this country, who have frequently been entertained by the Australian media.

But while his language and tone are angry, what Tarrant actually says - the things he calls for, like a halt to Islamic immigration - are views widely held and expressed within

government, parliament and our broader leadership... the leaders who plough our fields with intolerance, then express condolences when people like Tarrant carry out the violence.

If we're to find our way out of the toxic mess that we've built for ourselves, it's going to require an honest reckoning of our past. That's an enormous task, given the depth of our denial.

In responding to Fraser Anning's comments yesterday, Prime Minister Scott Morrison also said Anning's views had no place in Australian Parliament. In fact, those sorts of views have *always* been a part of Australian Parliament.

This is Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, speaking after the passage of our parliament's first major piece of legislation in 1901, called the Immigration Restriction Act: "All men who come to these shores with a clean record who leave behind a memory of class distinctions and religious differences of the old world are Australians. No n\*gger, no Chinaman, no laska, no Kanaka, no purveyor of cheap coloured labour is an Australian."

That legislation was known as the White Australia Policy, and remained in force until the mid 1970s (at the time the strapline of the magazine which published the remarks, *The Bulletin*, was 'Australia for the white man'. It finally closed its doors in 2008).

So contrary to Morrison's assertions, these sorts of comments don't just *belong* in Australian Parliament, that's routinely from where they emanate.

For a way forward, we also need to acknowledge our present. If you look at Scott Morrison's [official Twitter account](#) today, he's posted eight times on the attack in Christchurch at the time of press. But he pointedly avoids using the 'M' word, referring instead to 'all New Zealanders' and 'all Kiwis', as though the attack was not specifically targeted at Muslims. But when the shoe is on the other foot - when two Australians were killed by a Muslim terrorist in Melbourne last year - Morrison found voice, naming and shaming the Islamic community for not doing enough to stop the violence.

"For those who want to stick their head in the sand, for those who want to make excuses for those who stick their head in the sand, you are not making Australia safer. You are giving people an excuse to look the other way and not deal with things right in front of you.

"If there are people in a religious community, an Islamic community, that are bringing in hateful, violent, extremist ideologies into your community, you've got to call it out."

Indeed. But what of the non-Islamic communities, who breed men like Brendon Tarrant? What are they doing? Where is the blanket condemnation of them from our Prime Minister? Why isn't the Mayor of Grafton, where Tarrant grew up, being held to account? Or [Dr Murray Harvey](#), the Catholic Bishop of Grafton?

Besides honestly acknowledging our present, our best way out of this mess is to start applying standards equally - to treat all citizens in this country with the same respect, and afford them the same rights and courtesies. And we must demand that our elected leaders begin and uphold that process.

On that front, sadly, we do not presently have a leadership in Australia capable of the task. Our dog whistling, our Islamophobia, our racism and fear of brown people is so entrenched that, as we speak, sitting in Scott Morrison's Prime Ministerial office is a trophy - *literally* a

trophy – in the shape of a boat, with a plaque on it that reads, "[I stopped these](#)".

So we need to find other people to lead this nation. Our leaders stopped the boats – we need to stop their votes. We need to clean out our parliament at the May 2019 election. Where we sit today is a direct result of our past. It's time we took control of our future.

There is no other option, because while it certainly is a shock, and deeply distressing, that the man who massacred at least 49 Muslims in New Zealand was an Australian, it should also come as no surprise.

We've been importing and then fomenting hatred in this nation since 1788. Now, finally, we're exporting it.

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