News Limited and the construction of
Howard Government discourse about
Muslims in Australia 2001–2007

Shawn Lourigan

BA (Hons), Dip Ed, MVA

School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science

Arts, Education and Law Group

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Philosophy

November 2013
ABSTRACT

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre can be justifiably viewed as a turning point in relations between the Islamic world and the West, foregrounding a dominant pejorative representation of Muslims and Islam that continues unabated. The aim of this thesis is to explore media representations of Howard Government discourse about Muslims in Australia from 2001 to 2007.

The research examined three prominent and highly popularised cases relating to Islam and Muslims, namely comments made in 2006 by the ex-Grand Mufti of Australian Muslims, Sheik Hilali; the arrest and detention in 2007 of Doctor Mohamed Haneef; and the discourse surrounding the traditional female Muslim garment known as the hijab.

This thesis examines the language used by the government and by News Limited print media when referring to Muslims and Islam from 2001 to 2007, to ascertain whether there was a marked increase in the use of terms that could be classified as being negative or perpetuating stereotypes. I used a combined qualitative/quantitative methodology to examine both the collated newspaper articles and political documents.

Findings based on content analysis of selected media releases in 2001 and 2007 reveal the unrelentingly negative way in which the federal government discussed the Muslim community in Australia. The Howard Government’s negative tenor was found to be consistent during the period studied, with a focus on specific pejorative terms ranging from “threat” through to “other”, “un-Australian” and “burden”. The negative construction of Australia’s Muslim community is clearly evident in the majority of Howard Government statements surveyed.

Analysis of News Limited newspaper reporting during the same period indicated that it largely adopted the negativity and specific references of the federal government. Media dependence upon government statements and spokespersons in part explains this relationship. The findings generally support the Herman and Chomsky “propaganda model” that holds a pessimistic view of the news media’s critical
abilities. However, on a number of occasions the newspapers departed from the Howard Government’s unchanging stance, following certain key events and revelations such as occurred in the Dr Haneef case.

I find that there is clearly scope for disrupting a flow of negative constructions from government to media and ultimately to audiences, and suggest some ways in which responsibility might be taken for doing this.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge, belief and understanding this work contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in this thesis itself.

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Shawn Daniel Lourigan

15 May, 2017
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ABBREVIATIONS

ABC = Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS = Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACMA = Australian Communications and Media Authority
ADA = Australian Defence Association
ADF = Australian Defence Force
AFIC = Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
AFP = Australian Federal Police
AIC = Australian Islamic College
ALP = Australian Labor Party
APC = Australian Press Council
ASIO = Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
CMSSC = Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee
CNN = Cable News Network
DHCA = Darulfatwa High Council of Australia
FMS = Federation of Muslim Students
GIRU = Griffith University’s Islamic Research Unit
IHRC = Islamic Human Rights Commission
ISA = Ideological State Apparatus
ICV = Islamic Council of Victoria
LNP = Liberal National Party
MCRG = Muslim Community Reference Group
MEAA = Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
VCAT = Victorian Civil and Administration Tribunal
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of my dissertation has taken me on roads down which I had never expected to travel. This research has occupied a great deal of my time over the last six years. In that time, the nation has been in the charge of a Liberal leader, through two Labor leaders, and now a Liberal leader again. My journey would not have been possible at all without the continuing and unfa]tering guidance and assistance of my supervisors.

Finally, this dissertation has been made possible by the unwavering patience of those around me. I would like to offer many thanks to my partner Sairoong and my family, my mother, sister, niece and nephew for their continuing support and patience during the past six years. My thesis is also dedicated to my father who, unfortunately, passed away before its completion. It was his belief in the importance of education that has been my guiding light. Lastly, thank-you Steven, Buddy, Portia, Purdy, Sylvester and Kat, for always keeping me grounded throughout this journey.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Research Question: “In what ways did the Murdoch press represent Howard Government rhetoric about Muslims in Australia?”

The modern media play an important role in determining what parts of political dialogue will be presented to the public. On the 12 November 2007, the day of the Liberal-National Coalition’s campaign launch for the Australian Federal election, Prime Minister John Howard delivered a speech for 42 minutes but that night on the evening news, voters on average heard only 10.4 seconds of it.¹ The media’s presentation of political discourse, their choices regarding what will be included or omitted, can set the tone for a news story.² The media’s framing of the arrival of refugees on the freighter, the Tampa, in 2001 helped gain public approval of the federal government’s actions.³ Following the attacks on September 11, the media refocused on the Howard Government rhetoric of national security and representations of the Muslim community in Australia. In the period after 2001, longstanding negative representations of Australian attitudes about Muslims intensified following the initial arrival of refugees, with these representations becoming an established feature in media coverage of government discourse. Due to a number of significant controversies, the period between the World Trade Centre attacks of September 11 2001 and the defeat of the Howard government in the 2007 election, provides an especially valuable window into media constructions of government discourses regarding Muslims in Australia. It is, of course, impractical to conduct data collection and analysis in relation to all Australian media. I have restricted my study to the print media, and within that, undertaken close scrutiny of a particular sample of influential east coast newspapers from the News Limited stable: The Australian (national), The Daily Telegraph (Sydney), the Herald Sun.

¹ Sally Young, “Political discourse in the age of the soundbite”, Australasian Political Science
² ibid.
(Melbourne) and The Courier Mail (Brisbane). (See Chapter 3, Methodology, for rationale.)

1.1 Background to the Research

As a format for disseminating information, Australia, along with the majority of the Western world, has adopted an approach to the role of the media that is mainly informed by what can be described as the American model. Since the Whitlam election campaigns in the 1970s the relationship between politics and media in Australia has undergone a process of radical alteration. All major Australian parties now hire media consultants and political pundits to provide advice on how to spin news stories and how to persuade the public via the media.4

News media organisations have a unique capacity to influence public opinion and political decisions. The leading power groups in Australia are the media and government, with these groups possessing the ability to censor and manipulate information.5 Even when politicians are not directly trying to persuade the media, they may succeed in influencing the way the media choose to report and in turn the way the readership responds to a story.6 In examining the modern American political system, literary theorist and cultural critic Edward Said argued that the media guide and frame all political comment.7 In this process a corresponding national consensus is created by the power of the media and their interpretation of the political discourse.8

In Australia, media ownership is particularly concentrated in the hands of very few proprietors. In the case of newspapers, for example, the major capital city dailies, the weekend papers and the national papers are all in the hands of Murdoch or Fairfax. In addition to these issues of ownership, it is also the case that in Australia the

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6 “Media control and ownership”, Policy background paper No. 3 June 2014, Department of Communications.
8 ibid.
connection between the press and politics has at times been reinforced by the close relationship many members of the Canberra press gallery undoubtedly have with politicians. Some journalists in Canberra have social friendships with politicians and are dependent on them for inside stories. Boris Frankel has argued that this relationship often makes unbiased reporting difficult with journalists being at times reluctant to “bite the hand that feeds them”. Ian Ward observes that not only is it within the power of the news media to influence the political agenda and the fortunes of governing parties, governments can also adjust the laws within which the media can function.

Following 2001 there were a number of examples of an interchange of personnel between the media and the Howard Government. Howard’s former speechwriter, Christopher Pearson became a columnist for The Weekend Australian. Journalist Janet Albrechtsen was one of Howard’s more vocal supporters, firstly in The Sydney Morning Herald and later on in The Australian. In 2005, this support was rewarded when Albrechtsen was appointed by Prime Minister Howard to serve on the ABC board. More importantly for the Coalition, especially considering Howard’s focus on his “battlers”, was the support offered by the tabloid newspapers. Piers Akerman’s columns in Sydney’s The Daily Telegraph were also significant for the government for their ability to be “potential wide talking points” on issues favoured by the

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10 ibid.
12 ibid.
13 “Battler” is an Australian colloquial term that traditionally referred to working class people who continued to persevere with their lives despite financial or personal hardship. Its origins lay in ideals of solidarity, community and mateship forged in environmental, military and industrial adversity. It gradually also developed associations with organised labour and the trade union movement. Despite John Howard’s pride in his middle-class, small-business family origins and his professional political commitment to a conservative, anti-Union ideology, as Prime Minister he took up regular usage of the term “battler” as central to his political discourse. In public and media use, “Aussie Battlers” thus came to infer, and then to incorporate, the lower-to-middle portion of an already huge and rapidly expanding Australian middle class. This discursive shift and its accompanying rearrangement of the national imaginary was achieved all the more successfully because it was undertaken at a time when the unskilled and skilled workers of the term’s original reference were either falling from sight or transforming under the stresses and/or opportunities presented by neo-liberal economic policies and the impacts of globalisation on Australian primary and manufacturing industry.
Coalition such as national security.\footnote{Ward, p. 131.} Among the Canberra press gallery journalists, Dennis Shanahan of The Australian actively reported the Howard Government’s point of view and, as a result, benefited from more government exclusives than any other journalist in the capital.\footnote{ibid.} Piers Akerman in The Daily Telegraph defined Howard’s ideological opponents on the political Left as “those who support the undocumented entry of refugees, who are anti-U.S., those who fail to see the Iraq conflict as part of the ‘war on terror’, those who refuse to support measures aimed at Islamo-fascists”.\footnote{D. Marr, Panic. Black Inc, Agenda, Collingwood, 2011, p. 44.}

As leader of the Coalition, John Howard was undoubtedly adept at managing the media, and as Prime Minister he was able to make sure that his ministers were aware of the public relations context of their portfolios and policies, preparing Cabinet submissions “containing draft media releases”.\footnote{W. Errington & P. Van Onselen, John Winston Howard: The Definitive Biography, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2007, p. 316.}

Any possibility of unbiased news reporting had been increasingly challenged by political influence and the desire of news agencies not to be viewed as “un-Australian”. Studies such as the one conducted in 2007 by former New South Wales Ombudsman Irene Moss AO, the findings of which were published in her report The Independent Audit of the State of Free Speech in Australia, have found that there has been a gradual erosion of press freedom in Australia. Moss observed that the erosion of press freedom had occurred through political legislation and voluntary media self-censorship. In her report, Moss found that the changing nature of the media combined with security threats to Australia, both real and perceived, resulted in a gradual erosion of certain freedoms in this country.\footnote{I. Moss, Report of the Independent Audit into the State of Free Speech in Australia, Australia’s Right to Know, Sydney, 2007, p. i.}

Moss concluded that in Australia media freedom and free speech were gradually being whittled away by “almost imperceptible degrees”.\footnote{ibid.} Moss also found that government in Australia relied increasingly on spin and raising barriers to mask information.\footnote{ibid.} Her report is deeply cognisant of the role that the events of September 2001 played in eroding these
freedoms in the name of national security. This is a situation that has also occurred in both the United Kingdom and the USA, countries that have a similar high level of media ownership dominated by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation.  

The globalisation of news has also coincided with a continuing reduction in media proprietorship, with Rupert Murdoch the top American media mogul. Murdoch has a longstanding reputation for using his media outlets as blunt tools of political influence. Following September 11, 2001, Murdoch’s newspapers actively covered government discussion about the role and position of Muslims in Australian society. In the first two years following the invasion in Iraq, Murdoch’s News Limited media outlets, including The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, the Herald Sun and The Courier Mail, all ran editorials that were openly supportive of the Bush-Blair-Howard policy position. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, Murdoch’s Australian newspapers took an editorial stance that openly backed Prime Minister Howard, running diatribes in their opinion pages attacking critics of the “war on terror”, and rallying opinion against this so called “coalition of the whining”.  

During times of conflict or events of “national interest”, including the first and initially the second Gulf Wars, it can be difficult to distinguish journalists from government policy makers. In Australia, many journalists have become so accustomed to reducing the complexities of government policy to simple constructs that they apparently baulk when hard questions of politicians are required. This can potentially have serious ramifications for any group, ethnic or otherwise, whose interests clash with those of the government. Following 9/11, the Howard

21 ibid.  
23 ibid. A historical note: Murdoch’s transparent political positioning began with a moderately left-wing agenda in his early Australian newspapers, then moved through various increasingly right-wing positions to become the highly conservative stance that has been the hallmark of his print, broadcast and on-line global media empire since the Thatcher/Reagan years.  
26 Broinowski, p. 112.  
Government gradually introduced more stringent security measures lawfully, and with the support of the electorate, culminating in the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2005.\textsuperscript{29} The News Limited newspapers backed these measures, drawing limited editorial attention to the fact that the principal targets of the measures were most often people originating from the Middle East.\textsuperscript{30}

The introduction of the new “anti-terror” laws in Australia following the events of 2001 and the Bali bombings also had a detrimental effect on what and how journalists reported. These new laws undoubtedly significantly reduced and restricted what journalists were willing or able to cover, especially if the story related to an issue of “national security”. Several federal acts provided penalties for those who breached these new provisions, provisions that also restricted access to or publication of any information on the number of cases in which the “legislation has been applied and the extent that reporting has been prevented”.\textsuperscript{31} The new laws would be used primarily to target members of Australia’s Muslim community.

The issue of religious and political censorship in Australia, and how politics and media helped represent events of interest, was revealed in the treatment of certain Islamic literature that had been proscribed as being dangerous. In 2005, an Islamic bookshop in the Sydney suburb of Lakemba was accused by a number of newspapers, including \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, of selling books that promoted jihad and attacked Western civilisation as the culture of oppression, injustice and racism.\textsuperscript{32} When the New South Wales Attorney General refused to prosecute the bookshop, the Commonwealth Attorney General and Liberal Party minister, Philip Ruddock, referred eight of the books to the Classification Board of the Office for Film and Literature Classification. The Board initially refused to ban any of the eight texts, and even when Ruddock appealed that decision, the Board nevertheless only banned some

\textsuperscript{31} Moss, p. 12.
of the books.\textsuperscript{33} Andrew Bolt, writing in Melbourne’s \textit{Herald Sun}, argued that it was time that organisations such as the Film and Literature Classification Board acted for the majority, complaining “our institutions have bent over to be tolerant to the intolerant”.\textsuperscript{34} Commentator Piers Ackerman supported the sentiments of Bolt, claiming, “Muslims in Western countries constantly resort to civil rights law to claim their religion has been vilified or ridiculed”.\textsuperscript{35}

On certain occasions the Murdoch media has also misrepresented comments made by politicians about Muslims. In 2004, News Limited’s \textit{The Daily Telegraph} enhanced the story that New South Wales Premier Bob Carr was ensuring that mosques were being actively patrolled for security reasons. However, what \textit{The Daily Telegraph} had failed to report was that these patrols were actually for the benefit of the Islamic community and not because the mosques were a “target for jihad”.\textsuperscript{36}

The West’s increasingly suspicious attitude towards Muslims since 2001 was reflected in Australia’s relationship with its own Muslim community. Muslims in Australia had experienced forms of alienation long before the terrorist attacks of 9/11. This focus increased significantly with the First Gulf War in 1991 and the associated racial stereotyping of Muslims as Arabs and all Arabs as Muslims, a process which resulted in increasing attacks, racial insults and negative labelling of Muslims in Australia.\textsuperscript{37} I thus discuss the development of Australia’s Muslim communities before examining media representations of political discourse towards Muslims since 2001.

1.2 Islam in Australia

The image of Muslims that the media presents to the Australian public is of particular importance because Islam is the second fastest growing religion in Australia.\textsuperscript{38} This

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\textsuperscript{33} ibid. p. 3.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} R. Hassan, \textit{Australian Muslims: A demographic, social and economic profile of Muslims in Australia}. International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia, 2015.
change in Australia’s religious demography has become a matter of concern for some parts of the non-Muslim community, among whom the changes in population have accentuated existing tensions. What is reported and represented by the press clearly impacts upon community relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. The change in demographics has implications not only for the proportion but also the ethnicities of Australia’s Muslim population. Current immigration trends indicate that the ethnicities of Islam in Australia will soon be predominately from South Asia and Africa rather than the Middle East. This will mean that traditional media representations equating “Muslim” and “Middle Eastern” will be challenged, as also will assumptions concerning the kinds of “security risks” posed by the Islamic community.

1.2.1 Population

The rapid growth of the Muslim community in Australia since the 1970s has coincided with a higher public profile for Muslims. From being a community that numbered only in its thousands following the Second World War, Muslims have grown to be just behind Buddhists as the largest non-Christian religious group in Australia, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicating that nearly 2 per cent of the Australian population had Islam as their religion in 2012-2013. ABS census figures show that between 1996 and 2001 there was a significant increase in the Muslim population in Australia, when the number of people affiliated with Islam increased by forty per cent. Obviously, in relative terms, Muslims continue to constitute a very small proportion of the overall population, however it is important to note that most of this growth has been concentrated in two states, and particularly in the capital cities of those states. The 2006 ABS figures show that New South Wales has the largest Muslim population with 49.6 per cent of Muslim Australians residing

39 ibid.
40 ibid.
41 While I am aware of the problematics of using these terms such as “Middle East” and “Middle Eastern” in that they are unifying terms that erase differences, they are so established that there are few other terms you can use without becoming cumbersome.
in that state, followed by Victoria, which has 32.1 per cent of Australian Muslims. Next is Western Australia, which, at 7.1 per cent, has the third highest population of Muslim Australians. The census findings also highlight the diverse nature of settlement in this country, with Sydney having the largest concentration of people of Lebanese heritage while Melbourne has a larger concentration of people of Turkish ancestry. The Sydney suburb of Lakemba, like other working class areas including Auburn and Bankstown, provided cheap accommodation and reasonably good access to the city by train or bus, with migrants settling close to each other, establishing social networks and support systems, and building clubs, schools and mosques.

Since the 1990s, government census data has demonstrated a vibrant community profile of Muslims in Australia, presenting a mostly youthful demographic, which is making its way into the “work force, and is progressively more educated in state and, increasingly, private Muslim schools, and is establishing the social and community structures required to support the Muslim way of life in this country”.

In addition to world affairs, the concentration of population growth in particular regions may have contributed to the fact that an increase in Muslim migration to Australia also coincided with a rise in instances of anti-Muslim violence. Strike Force Neil’s investigation into the 2005 Cronulla riots found that preceding the incident there was an inaccurate exaggeration of facts, with this distortion of the events leading to a significant amount of negative “publicity on radio, television and the print media”.

Muslim communities, including those in Australia, have frequently been misrepresented in Western discourse. The Palestinian-American theorist and

\[ \text{References} \]

41 ibid.
42 ibid.
45 The riots, which occurred in the Sydney beachside suburb of Cronulla, were a series of mob driven race riots which began on the 11 December 2005. The riots, which resulted from increasing tensions between young males from Sydney’s Lebanese and Anglo populations, spread to nearby suburbs over the next few nights.
academic Edward Said wrote in 1981 that there was no real correspondence between the “Islam” as understood in the Western context and Islam as an actuality, with the West’s selective understanding ignoring the “enormously varied life that goes on within the world of Islam, its millions of square miles of territory, its dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, and cultures”.

This restricted focus has helped to solidify the perception among a proportion of the Western public that Islam is predominantly an Arabic religion, therefore interpreting political turmoil in the “Arab world”, and the Middle East more broadly, as applicable to and indicative of Muslims everywhere, regardless of ethnicities, civil societies and political conditions. This erroneous perception ignores the fact that Arab Muslims comprise only about 20 per cent of the world’s Muslim population. Statistically, approximately one-third of Muslims live as minorities in non-Muslim majority countries such as India, China, Russia, and France. Just as significantly, particularly for Australia, Indonesia, immediately to our north, is the nation with the world’s largest Muslim population.

1.2.2 History of Islam in Australia

In spite of its relative geographical isolation Australia has had a long association with Muslims, one that predates white settlement. Recorded landings in Northern Australia by Muslim Macassan traders from what is now Indonesia can be traced back to at least 1650. The explorer Matthew Flinders also reported encountering Macassan ships on a number of occasions off Arnhem Land in the early 1800s. Their presence had a direct influence on local inhabitants with Macassan words finding their way into Indigenous languages. In the Nineteenth Century Afghan Muslim cameleers played a significant role in inland exploration and the construction of the Overland

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51 ibid.
53 ibid.
Telegraph.\textsuperscript{55} The refugee detention centre at Woomera, one of the places used to hold Afghan asylum seekers during the years of the Howard Government post-2001, was situated in the same region of South Australia that was regularly traversed by the cameleers.\textsuperscript{56} The existence of Muslim communities in Australia for over 150 years is noteworthy in that it contrasts strongly with a popular view that the Muslim community in Australia only began in the second half of the Twentieth Century.

There has also been a long-term and relatively widely held misconception regarding the demographic make-up of Australia’s Muslim population, which has been associated with the geographical area that the West refers to as “the Middle East” (as determined relative to Europe). Australian Muslims constitute a far more diverse community than is suggested by a simplistic link with “the Arab world”,\textsuperscript{57} in itself an ill-conceived notion that erases linguistic, cultural and religious differences in that region. Indeed, the Australian Muslim community is considerably more diverse than most European Muslim communities, with migrants coming from Africa, Asia, the Subcontinent, the Middle East and Europe.\textsuperscript{58} This diversity of ethnic origins is also reflected in the appearance of the Muslim community in Australia, with dress styles ranging from the Westernised and the secular to more traditional forms of Muslim clothing such as the hijab.\textsuperscript{59} Media coverage has often ignored Muslims who do not come from the Arab world. The non-Arabic Turkish community is the second largest Muslim community in Australia but has regularly been overlooked even though it might be seen as a “positive” example of Muslim migrant assimilation into Australian society.

\textit{1.2.3 Diversity}

Media coverage and political discourse has focused on the potential violent threat posed by Muslims, with this violence frequently linked back to the political

\textsuperscript{55} Cleland, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{56} Healey, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{57} R. Inglehart, and P. Norris. “Muslim Integration into Western Cultures: Between Origins and Destinations”. HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP09-007, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2009.
\textsuperscript{58} R. Hassan.
\textsuperscript{59} ibid.
conditions of parts of the “Middle East”\textsuperscript{60}. The demographic breakdown of Australia’s Muslim population shows that these negative representations do not accurately reflect the social make-up of the present day Muslim-Australian community. Statistical data shows that the majority of Muslims coming to Australia are not from the so-called Middle East region.

The diverse demographic make-up of Australia’s Muslim population is one of its strengths, avoiding a situation encountered by some other Western countries such as Britain where the Muslim community is relatively homogenous. Unlike in parts of Europe, the incidence of Muslim initiated terror attacks in Australia has been limited, with the most devastating terrorist attack on Australian citizens, committed by foreign terrorists in Bali. Nevertheless, studies have found that the diversity of the Muslim community in Australia is not represented in media reporting, and my work has suggested the same.

In her study of media discourse about the “other”, Anne Aly observes that in the post-2001 context, there has been a reinscribing of the conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{60} She demonstrates that ignorance of diversity pervades much of the literature that deals with issues involving Australian Muslims as a subculture of the broader Australian community.\textsuperscript{61} Aly notes that when referring to Muslims the Australian media often uses the term “community” in the singular rather than the plural, with media and political discourses homogenising Australian Muslims and inscribing religion as a primary marker of identity.\textsuperscript{62}

The diversity that now exists among Australia’s Muslims extends not only to cultural but also to theological differences. Both major branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi’a, are represented within Australia’s Muslim communities, with a breakdown of 63 per cent to 37 per cent respectively.\textsuperscript{63} Although the majority of Muslims identify with either the Sunni or Shi’a traditions, there are also significant populations belonging to

\textsuperscript{60} A. Aly, \textit{A Study of Audiences Responses to the Media Discourse about the ‘Other’: The Fear of Terrorism Between Australian Muslims and the Broader Community}, The Edwin Mellon Press, Lewiston, 2010, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{61} ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Omar & Allen, p. 11.
Alawi, Alevia, Ismaili, Bohra, Ahmedi and Druze sects, with not all sects identifying with Muslims or Islam and not all mainstream Muslims accepting these sects. As a result of the diversity of the communities, there is no single spokesperson representing the interests of all Muslims, and there is no single model for Muslim community organisation in Australia. By continually failing to recognise the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of Muslim communities in this country, the mainstream media plays an important role in perpetuating the stereotyped image of Arab and Muslim Australians.

The divisions that have existed, and still exist, in Australia’s Muslim communities have been shown in areas such as conflicts over the development of mosques in Sydney. There have been examples of where Muslim groups with a European heritage frequently differentiate themselves from “Arabs”. This is a move that has been criticised as effectively reinforcing “a negative construction of the Arab Muslim”.

1.2.4 Conclusion

Numerous studies have attempted to highlight the negative construction of images of Muslims, both in Australia and overseas. The discursive practices of political leaders and the media in this country have helped enforce the negative image of Australian Muslims. These negative representations often stem from misconceptions about Islamic cultural practices. The Islamic narrative in Western discourse has a history that far predates white settlement in Australia, with Islam being misrepresented by Europeans almost from the beginning of its emergence from the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. Practices that are culturally specific to particular groups and regions are often taken to be representative of Islamic religious tradition. In some countries, including Lebanon, war and colonialism have blurred the lines between religion and

65 Bedar, p. 43.
68 ibid.
69 ibid. p. 81.
cultural practice, with the two frequently becoming inseparable in the West’s perceptions of Muslims.\(^\text{70}\)

A historical study of Muslim migration to the West reveals that religion may not have posed an obstacle to Muslims in the colonial or even in the “White Australia” period because they comprised such a negligible minority.\(^\text{71}\) However since the increase in Muslim migration to Australia from the 1970s, Muslim communities have had to overcome the challenge of learning what it means to practise their faith in a non-Muslim land as well as define what it means to be a Muslim in a national context that has fostered a considerably more pronounced degree of cultural suspicion as a consequence of more recent world events.\(^\text{72}\) With increasing impact, the Muslim presence in Australia has been erased, marginalised or criminalised, situated on the literal and rhetorical periphery of the nation.

### 1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Having introduced and contextualised the study in this chapter, the remainder of this work is organised as follows.

Chapter Two reviews the literature examined for this study, identifying any gaps in the relevant previous areas of scholarship and establishing an analytical framework based on previous scholarly approaches. While this review focuses in particular on media representations of Howard Government discourse about Muslims in Australia in the years after 2001, more broadly it provides a rationale for the focus of the study and some of the key works that have influenced my thinking.

Chapter Three explains in detail the research methodology I have deployed. In providing discussing the choice of content analysis as an investigative tool, I recognise the need for coherence between theory and method, and provide an outline of the overall conceptual framework for the study. This chapter examines how, as a

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\(^\text{72}\) Bouma, p. xiii.
technique of research, content analysis offers the most suitable avenue of investigation while giving an insight into the data generated from the collated information.

Chapters Four, Five and Six contain the main body of the new research undertaken for this project, constituting three case studies that examine controversies involving Sheik Hilali, Dr Mohamed Haneef and the wearing of the hijab. These three case studies were selected on the basis that they each occurred at times of a heightened anxiety towards Muslims in Australia. The aim of these three chapters is to examine media reporting of government discourse in relation to these three prominent issues.

Chapter Four comprises a comprehensive study of the controversy that arose following a Ramadan sermon given by Grand Mufti Sheik Hilali in October 2006. The principal focus of this chapter is an examination of language used in political commentary regarding Sheik Hilali, primarily in the period between 2006 and 2007, and media representations of this commentary.

Chapter Five outlines the arrest and detention of Dr Mohamed Haneef in July 2007. This chapter also examines the Howard Government’s actions during this time and the media’s representations of those actions, identifying potential conflicts in the debate. I analyse the government’s handling of the case against Dr Haneef and the media’s reporting, focusing on how News Limited newspapers represented and/or reproduced the Howard Government’s discourse during this period.

Chapter Six analyses Australian political discussions about the wearing of the hijab, and media representations of this discourse in the period following 2001. I describe how, as a symbol, the hijab has been a key focus in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of Muslims. The hijab was chosen for this analysis because as an item of traditional clothing it is regarded by a proportion of the Australian public and political figures as emblematic of Islam.

Chapter Seven discusses the overall findings of the research, bringing together the arguments presented in the dissertation to offer insights and recommendations.
Chapter Eight, the Conclusion, reflects on the achievements and the limits of the study, suggesting possible directions for further study. In summarising the central arguments of the dissertation, this chapter draws on the key themes and ideas explored throughout.

In the review of the literature that follows, I am also concerned to provide a clear expression of how that literature has informed my choice of the focus, methods and concepts.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter establishes a framework for the analysis of media construction of Howard Government discourses about Muslims in Australia between 2001 and 2007. It does so by exploring the work of Edward Said, work that has built on Said, and other contemporary work on media and politics in Australia. To contextualise representations of Muslims in Australia, first I examine the historical construction of Islam in the West and how Orientalist constructs are maintained in Western discourse. In this manner the chapter situates media representation of government discourses about Muslims in its broader academic and social context.

2.1 Orientalism and the representation of Islam and Muslims in Western discourse

The scholarly concept of “Orientalism” has strongly informed the contemporary view of how Islam is positioned in the West. Within the boundaries of any established dominant culture there are areas of positive and negative attributes that tend to feed and draw upon pre-existing biases and assumptions; this is an area where traditional academic analysis may provide an “interpretational matrix of contrasts and comparisons”. The modern image of Islam in the West is frequently negative, and has been based on the traditional stereotyping of the “Orient”, which was geographically taken to begin to the East of Greece and culturally taken to differ from post-Enlightenment Europe. The countries which make-up the Islamic world of the Middle East are frequently placed within this negative paradigm.

2.1.1 Key Terms

When approaching Orientalism as a concept there are a number of designations that can be identified as relevant. These include the broad field of Area Studies – a term now considered too generalised but often still used in conjunction with Oriental Studies; Style of Thought – used to designate a style of thought based upon an

ontological and epistemological distinction, as in “the Orient” and “the Occident”; and *Discourse* – what we have come to call Orientalism is part of a discourse, or way of thinking, speaking and writing that has been used for dealing with the Orient since the eighteenth century, and can be understood to be a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and exerting authority over it”.74 The Occident as a concept traditionally referred to Western Christian Europe though it is now used as an umbrella term to describe the post-enlightenment world.75 James Kurth noted that the identification of the Occident with the Enlightenment was important for two reasons. Firstly, Kurth proposed that the only Western tradition embraced by the political, intellectual, and economic elites of the West is that of the Enlightenment.76 Secondly, the political, intellectual and economic freedoms widely associated with the Enlightenment are juxtaposed in an Orientalist discourse with the “superstitions” of the Orient.77

However, scholars such as Edward Said have strongly critiqued Orientalism due to the way in which it places Islam in juxtaposition to the hierarchical dominance of Western thought and culture. Said and others demonstrate that this negative discursive construction has contributed to the ongoing misunderstanding of Islam as a religion in the West. In particular, it has set a tone of vilification of both Islam and Muslims in Western literature and popular culture, a situation that is perpetuated in the present.

### 2.1.2 Orientalism

In his highly influential text, *Orientalism*, Edward Said described and deconstructed the misrepresentation of Muslims in Western discourse, bringing a poststructuralist understanding to bear on the ideological underpinnings of the discourse, and exposing the part it plays in power-relations between “the West” and Islamic cultures. Said defined the idea of the Orient as something that is essentially European in nature. Since antiquity the Orient had been for Europeans, especially the British and the

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74 R. M. Seiler, *Communications Studies 441: Cultural Studies in Communications*, University of Calgary, Calgary. [http://www.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/said.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/said.htm), accessed 21 March 2009.
77 ibid.
French, a “place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences”. The long tradition of what Said called Orientalism was a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is “based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience.” The importance of the Orient is that it is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of “Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisation and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the ‘other’”. In contrast to the constructed romanticism of the “other” in the Western tradition of writing about and representing Islam, Europeans have consistently positioned Muslims as “the irrational, fanatic, sexually enticing, despotic others”. Said identified the enduring influence of Orientalism on Western belief in its cultural hegemony, which positioned Europeans as culturally superior compared to Oriental backwardness.

As a frame of reference Orientalism originally emerged in Europe in the fourteenth century. By the nineteenth century the term “Orient” came to embrace an imprecisely defined area stretching from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to South-East Asia, so that “Islam and the Islamic heartlands [played] a significant role in the formation of Western attitudes towards the East”. Westerners who have resided in the East have generally refused to assimilate into any of the indigenous cultures, maintaining their own customs and manners, often to such a degree that they learn little of life and culture in the Orient, with those who have written books about the East having “frequently displayed little genuine knowledge and no appreciation of the local culture and religious customs”. The fundamental criticism of the assumptions behind Orientalism, as outlined by Said, is that “European writers studying the Orient cannot appreciate Asian intellectual and artistic creativity”. Such recognition is

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79 ibid.
80 ibid.
83 MacEoin & Al-Shahi, p. 10.
directly pertinent to this study.

In *Orientalism* Said argued that in this working literary canon the cultural dominance of the West always seeks to “demonstrate the comparatively greater strength of the Occident (British, French or American)”.

The critique of Orientalism attempts to illustrate how the Orient has been intellectually packaged for the West, with this packaging usually taking one of two forms – “either through the dissemination of modern learning or through the convergence of orientalist learning and modern colonialism”. Said argued that, since Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition in 1798, the West has been developing its orientalist attitudes to such an extent that they are now entrenched, so that when the term “Oriental” is thought of in relation to the Middle East it is usually in the context of “sensuality, despots, perversity, violence, laziness and backwardness”.

Since 2001 a field of scholarship has emerged that has been re-evaluating Said’s criticism of Orientalism. Paul Bogandor has been critical of Said’s approach to Oriental studies, contending that in “creating his demonic image of the Orientalist as racist ideologue, Said was loath to express any appreciation of the tradition”. Bogandor argues that Said “treated the whole of Western discourse about the Orient as a sinister expression of an elaborate colonialist plot to subjugate the natives”. Irfan Khawaja also found flaws in Said’s writing. Khawaja noted that Said’s thesis “depends on generalisations…which depend on the assumption that there is one stable about which to generalise”. Said is criticised by Khawaja for adhering to a “consistency of Orientalism and [the] idea about the Orient”. Khawaja found Said’s methodology to be flawed, with the use of consistency as a method of categorising a group being, when applied to the Arab world, a generalisation that Said found

88. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
problematical.\textsuperscript{92} Khawaja’s thesis is that Orientalists are no more a consistent group than the peoples of the Arab world.

In his 1981 text \textit{Covering Islam}, Said expands on how the idea of Orientalism is founded on the notion of juxtaposed ideologies, or to be more precise theologies – “Us” and “Them”, the “Orient” and “Occident”, the “West” and “Islam”.\textsuperscript{93} Said explores how the media portray and characterise Islam, and through their reporting seek to make the unknown “known”.\textsuperscript{94} Said’s main point is the difference between how the media represent Islam compared to the reality of the religion. In his view, media images are informed by accepted definitions of Islam rather than by the accuracy of those definitions.\textsuperscript{95} The success of such representations is demonstrated by how they have “survived many experiences and have been capable of adapting to new events, information and realities”\textsuperscript{96}.

In \textit{Covering Islam} Said uses the 1979 Iranian Revolution to explore the negative reporting of Islam in Western media, which in his view stemmed from a lack of understanding on the part of journalists.\textsuperscript{97} Western reporters in Tehran during the first days of the hostage crisis were often in a culturally unfamiliar country with no preparation or experience. Said notes that media reports coming out of Iran repeated the same accounts, which came to constitute the repetition of “the Islamic mentality”.\textsuperscript{98} This pervasive association in the media of Islam and Muslims with crime and terror has since become central to the spread of Islamophobic rhetoric.\textsuperscript{99} Said stresses the extent to which “together, the powerful concentration of mass media constitutes a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam”.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{92}ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} ibid. p. 9.
\textsuperscript{96} ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} ibid. p. xi-xii.
\textsuperscript{98} ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} M. Versi, “It’s time the media treated Muslims fairly”, \textit{The Guardian}, 23 September 2015.
\textsuperscript{100} Said, 1981, p.43.
Said’s approach is to examine how the media provide a forum for the opinions of experts, thereby producing and reproducing popular representations of Islam, thus demonstrating how the reality of Muslim life is mostly ignored in Western constructs. Instead “Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended, either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists”. For Said, these representations constitute a negative discourse in which the Western hegemony is perpetuated.

Said clearly identifies the focus of his critique with the subheading of Covering Islam, “how the media and experts determine how we see the rest of the world”. Said is critical of “Middle East experts” such as The New York Times’ Judith Miller, a journalist whose writing he describes as a textbook example of the inadequacies and distortions of media coverage of Islam. Such critique of mainstream media remains pertinent in the period analysed by the thesis. Said is also damning of Orientalist academics such as Bernard Lewis, whose work he criticises as emphasising the “whole of Islam as [being] basically outside the known, the familiar, acceptable world that ‘we’ inhabit”. For Said, the work of Western Oriental scholarship is informed by the hegemony, thereby serving to reproduce existing representations.

However, in his review of Covering Islam in The New York Times, Anthony Howard criticises Said’s research methodology. Howard observes that Said did not always carry out an “exhaustive examination of the available evidence”. He finds Said to be very selective in his case studies, interpreting the facts to suit his thesis. Contemporary critic Malise Ruthven recognises that coverage of Islam in the media is often misleading, and that Said’s argument is persuasive overall. However, Ruthven criticises Said’s thesis that all Western media reporting on Islam is inherently poor. In Ruthven’s analysis, Said is so focused on demolishing conventional wisdom about Islam that he is inclined to overlook some facts. Nevertheless, in the decades since

102 ibid.
106 ibid.
108 ibid.
Covering Islam was published, a prominent body of research has emerged which has sought to validate Said’s thesis.\textsuperscript{109}

Douglas Little explores the endurance of Orientalist stereotypes in American culture, and how inconsistent attitudes have affected the USA’s relationship with the countries of the Middle East. Alexander Lyon Macfie focuses on the very nature of Orientalism, examining case studies that explore representations of identity. Zachary Lockman frames the discussion about Orientalism through the recent history of the Middle East. Lockman develops Said’s view that scholarly representations of the Orient are not merely biased or even racist, they are ontological.\textsuperscript{110} In their very nature Orientalist representations of the Orient are very different, and usually inferior to, representations of the Western world, which are usually constructed as being superior.\textsuperscript{111} Diana Lary explores how Said’s ideas still have importance for contemporary relations between the “Occident” and the “Orient”.\textsuperscript{112} Lary achieves this by examining an area which Said did not address in Orientalism, Orientalism between South East Asian states and the West.\textsuperscript{113} The dichotomy between the Orient and the West, which Said identified as being an important factor in Oriental scholarship, is affirmed by Lary,\textsuperscript{114} for whom Oriental study is based on the notion of the “Other”, the inherent difference between the West and the Middle East, the West and Asia.\textsuperscript{115}

The Orientalist perception of the Islamic world is contrasted by Western concepts of liberal democracy and freedom. Results from a study of representations of Middle Eastern countries undertaken by Kincheloe and Steinberg indicates that the percentage of Muslims in the predominant religious denomination in a nation is negatively correlated with the perceived human rights of the nation being examined.\textsuperscript{116} One of

\textsuperscript{110} Lockman, p. 187.
\textsuperscript{111} ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Lary, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{113} ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Kincheloe & Steinberg.
the barometers used by both the United Nations and Reporters without Borders to
gauge the level of human rights in a country is the degree of freedom its media
enjoys.\textsuperscript{117} It seems that the higher the percentage of Muslims in a nation, the lower the
levels of press freedom in that nation. This is a perspective partly supported by the
democratic advocacy organisation Freedom House in a survey which found that out of
fifteen nations that exhibited a downward trend in media freedom in 2011, nine of
these were countries with a majority Muslim population.\textsuperscript{118} However, it is important
to note that in many cases the lack of press freedom has nothing to do with religion,
since dictatorships in the Middle East, North Africa and former states of the Soviet
Union are often secular in nature even if the majority religion is Islam.

These portrayals are clearly as much about Western fears, anxieties and self-doubts as
they are about Islam itself as a religion, given that the ways in which Islam and
Muslims are embedded in Western consciousness are becoming increasingly extreme,
especially following 2001.\textsuperscript{119} The cultural diversity of Islam is often ignored or
misunderstood by media and politicians, reinforcing the inherent weakness of claims
that a clear and present threat to security in the West emanates from the “existence of
a collective acting as a monolith called Islam”.\textsuperscript{120}

In perpetuating these stereotyped images of Islam, the media undoubtedly also plays a
significant role in both producing and reinforcing negative “Orientalist” perceptions
in the Western imaginary. In his study \textit{Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology
in the Press}, Roger Fowler argues that stereotypes, in so far as they constitute “tacit
mental categories”, are dialectically related to news values whereby “the occurrence
of a striking event will reinforce a stereotype and, reciprocally, the firmer the

\textsuperscript{118} A. Puddington, \textit{Freedom in the World 2012: The Arab Uprisings and their Global Repercussions},
Freedom House, New York, 2012, p. 23,
\textsuperscript{119} ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} S. Akbarzadeh & F. Mansouri (eds.), \textit{Islam and Political Violence: Muslim Diaspora and
stereotype, the more likely are relevant events to become news”. Fowler also notes that these socially constructed categorisations have become the accepted descriptive orthodoxy with the potential to “habitually saturate discourse”.

Early twentieth century thinkers such as Max Weber helped to establish stereotyped representations of the Muslim world. In *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion* Weber observed that prevailing Western views about “the Orient” continually, and with good reason, cultivated the dichotomy between the “Orient” and the “Occident”. Weber argued that, regardless of the exploitation of Western colonialism in the Middle East, Arab countries had only themselves to blame for failing to match the social and political advancements of countries in the West. Said observes that, even though scholars such as Weber had never thoroughly studied Islam, clichés such as these in relation to Islam influenced and confirmed many of the canonical viewpoints held by Orientalists.

However, critics of Orientalism argue that a rejection of Western thought and values should not be synonymous with a rejection of Modernity. Said’s view of the East/West dichotomy differs greatly from social theorists such as Weber, with Weber’s internalist theory of development blaming Islam for the failure of the Middle East to generate capitalism. The internalist theory of development places responsibility on internal rather than external factors for failure to develop socially, culturally or economically. Under this model the colonised countries are seen as responsible for their own development, including any apparent shortcomings, rather

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122 ibid.
125 ibid.
126 ibid., 2003, p. 259.
than the colonial powers who exploited them. Using this paradigm Weber argued that “[t]he Arab world was marked by despotic political structures, the absence of autonomous cities and distinct classes, and a continual decline since the days of ‘classical Islam’.” The adherence of theorists such as Weber to the arbitrary and uncertain structure of Orientalism meant that the theoretical impetus for this form of analysis carries with it all the implications of assumptions about the “uniqueness of the progressive West and the stagnant East”. Armando Salvatore argues that Islam was largely relevant to Weber’s system of social categorisation because it allowed him to contrast the Orient with “the uniqueness of Western development”. Edward Gimbel has attempted a defence of Weber’s methodology, arguing that criticism such as Said’s does “a great disservice to Weber” and that a “re-evaluation of Weber and his approach” is warranted. Sara Farris, however, agrees with Said’s criticism of Weber’s methodology, observing that:

Weber’s ontological distinction between East and West (typical of nineteenth-century Orientalism) and his employment of the ideal types in his description of non-western populations and cultures, [was] a simplifying and stereotypical tool of illustration.

2.1.3 Constructs of Muslims in Western Discourse

Said found that contemporary Western perceptions of Muslims and Arabs are entrenched in much older depictions that reach back to the early medieval era and beyond. In these constructs representations of groups such as the Muslim Moors constitute “the overriding ‘other’ against which Christendom and later Europeans and Westerners have defined themselves.”

130 Walker.
131 MacEoin & Al-Shahi, p. 15.
In European literature, the dominant discourse frequently vilified Islam, Muslims, and the Prophet himself, with Muhammad being represented as “an imposter”, “the epitome of lechery, debauchery and sodomy”, and a “devil”. Prominent writers in the canon of Western literature such as Dante, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Milton also contributed to the negative representation of Muhammad in orientalist imagery. In the world of medieval Europe, the Muslim Moors were the essence of “otherness”, a situation greatly reinforced by the history and horrors of the Crusades. By the Italian Renaissance, Dante’s Divine Comedy in the later fifteenth century had the Prophet Muhammad constantly split in two as an eternal punishment for creating religious schism. Among the shifting values of late Renaissance/early Enlightenment England Shakespeare gave us a courageous general, great leader and effective governor much loved by his people, in the form of the hero/anti-hero Othello. His tragic flaw is not that he is a North African “Moor”, or not a Christian, or not “white” but married to a “white” woman. His tragedy is that he is obsessively jealous, does not take his wife’s word over those of a dissembler, and thus murders the woman whom he loves more than his own life. Othello is a centrally a human story rather than a racial story. However, the relative absence of racial vilification in that play is undone in Hamlet where the young prince’s impassioned denunciation of his uncle, the murderer of the king his father and the seducer of his mother, culminates in the use of “Moor” as a term of abuse.

By the twentieth century T. E. Lawrence wrote about the Middle East from an anti-colonial, pro-Arab perspective. However, his view of the Middle East in the early twentieth century was rare, with there being even greater blurring of the ethnicity of being an Arab and the theological belief of being a Muslim, with the two terms being used almost interchangeably. It was in the period following the end of the Second World War in 1945 that Muslims began to feature prominently in media coverage and the mind of the public in the West. In the 1950s, Britain and France had their first

137 ibid.
138 ibid.
139 MacEoin & Al-Shahi, p. 11.
140 Parfitt & Egotova (eds.) p. 1.
141 T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, 1922.
encounter with the newly emerging pan-Arab nationalism which emerged under the leadership of Egypt’s President Nasser, culminating in the Suez Crisis. However, it was with the Iranian Revolution in 1979 that images of “mullahs and ayatollahs flickered across our television screens and crammed the front pages of our newspapers”.

The increasing challenges to Western hegemony posed by various events in the Middle East, combined with Western media’s Orientalist representations of Muslims, meant that an increasingly negative discourse developed, which, as Said noted, positioned Islam as the “religion of resistance”.

2.1.4 Media and Islamic issues in Australia

In Orientalism Said observed that representations of the Orient are based on falsely unifying categories such as “The West” or “Islam”. Two recent texts by Dutch journalist Joris Luyendijk cast a critical eye over not only the category of words that Western news media use when covering stories originating in the Middle East but also over the political discourse that drives a large section of mainstream media coverage. Luyendijk focuses on the significance that semantics play in Western discourse, a factor of importance though one that is, significantly, often understated by media analysts. In his texts Fit to Print and People like Us, Luyendijk refers to the selectiveness of language and how it is adapted to position the reader. Luyendijk argues that one of the reasons for this is that media companies are far more interested in the news as entertainment than in representing the truth of events or situations. The allocation of space in media coverage has had an effect on background information afforded to “hard” news stories, a factor which reduces contextualisation. Fit to Print covers the period from 1998 to 2003, which encapsulates the first two years of the Howard Government in the immediate period following 2001. Although Luyendijk examines the ramifications of monopolised

142 MacEoin, & Al-Shahi, p. 88.
144 ibid, p. 13.
145 J. Luyendijk, People Like us: Misrepresenting the Middle East, Counterpoint LLC, 2009.
146 J. Luyendijk, Fit to Print, Scribe, Melbourne, 2009, p. 4.
147 ibid.
media coverage from an international perspective, the correlation that he draws between the media and politics in Western democracies is also applicable when studying events in Australian media coverage post 2001.

A case in point for Luyendijk is the dichotomy in language used when reporting on the Middle East, primarily the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. Luyendijk gives the example of how a Jewish settler who claims that the land is given to him by God is referred to in the Western media as an “ultra-nationalist”, whereas a Palestinian Muslim who does the same is referred to as a “fundamentalist”. The term “ultra-nationalist” is critically loaded, but it is still secular, placing country first (in this context people who paint their faces with the flag on Australia Day could also be viewed as “ultra-nationalists”) while the term “fundamentalist” is now commonly used in a negative conjunction with fanatical religious beliefs. Equally challenging for objective journalism in most Western countries, though especially evident in the English language media, are the “simplifications and nationalisms inherent in all market-based news media”. Like Luyendijk, Giuliana Tiripelli recognises that there is a need for greater effort in “improving and diversifying” how the media report stories coming from the Middle East, proposing a model of journalism in which news stories are contextualised.

Luyendijk delineates the dilemma facing most democracies as being the reality that the information on which voters base their ballot-box decisions reflects not what they need to hear but media and social media’s perception of what they like to hear. In this scenario, what the majority of them do not hear is in-depth, complex analysis of the issues. The role that commerce plays in modern media is crucial in informing the content and tone of news coverage. A study by the International New York Times in the USA found that the primary American broadcasters had received advice from their communication consultants that recommended that the more nationalistic the

149 Luyendijk, Fit to Print, p. 241.
151 ibid.
reporting, the higher the viewing figures would be.\textsuperscript{152} The lesson for Australia’s media broadcasters from these recommendations is clear, especially considering the dominant role played by News Corporation in both the Australian and American media markets: specifically that most of the audience would prefer to watch simplistic “Us” and “Them” stories rather than complex analyses regarding conflicting interests and historical background pieces that make their own country look bad.\textsuperscript{153} In *Fit to Print* Luyendijk identifies the five most significant issues facing news coverage right now:

> News media needs to alert audiences that what they are following is news, how information is obtained from non-democratic countries, that while news represents the world these representations also influence the same world, news media needs to make sure that audiences are aware there are a number of perspectives relating to any story, and that there are simplifications and nationalisms inherent in all market-based news media.\textsuperscript{154}

Said noted that the media, including “innumerable tabloids and middle-brow journalists”, use “expertise [to recycle] the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalisations”.\textsuperscript{155} When the media fail in their role to accurately represent the truth this only serves to justify government’s use of power and violence.\textsuperscript{156} In his analysis, Luyendijk observes that the “news media are a countervailing power to politicians and corporations, and when media fail this can have serious consequences”.\textsuperscript{157} The ability of the media to factually report events while remaining impartial has frequently been the subject of scholarly discussion. Nel Ruigrok notes that journalists are always at risk of manipulation, regardless of whether they are reporting in a dictatorial state or a democracy.\textsuperscript{158} Ruigrok supports Luyendijk’s notion that the media function as a counterbalance to political and corporate interests.\textsuperscript{159} However, Marcel Broersma disagrees with Luyendijk’s assertion that what the press tells its audience is not

\textsuperscript{152} Luyendijk, p. 233.  
\textsuperscript{153} Luyendijk, p. 234.  
\textsuperscript{154} Luyendijk, p. 237.  
\textsuperscript{156} Said, 1981, p. xvi.  
\textsuperscript{157} Luyendijk, p. 239.  
\textsuperscript{158} N, Ruigrok, “From journalism of activism towards journalism of accountability”, *The International Communications Gazette*, Feb 2010, Vol. 72, No. 1. p. 85.  
\textsuperscript{159} ibid.
always the truth. While Broersma agrees that journalists do indeed represent an image of social reality that is distorted in one way or another, this distortion is in fact inherent to journalism.\textsuperscript{160} For Broersma, the work of Luyendijk and media analysts such as Nick Davies is problematic in that it does not reflect on the fact that bias in inevitable because reporting is a process of selection and of verifying true facts regardless of context.\textsuperscript{161} However, in her analysis of the role of the media in modern society Bernadette Kester disagrees with Broersma’s view that journalism by its very nature is biased. Kester instead supports Luyendijk’s call for a more self-reflective – that is, reflexive – and transparent form of journalism, that deploys processes that aim to offset external influences.\textsuperscript{162}

There is little new about concerns regarding the propensity of the media to be reductive when covering issues of social significance. Writing in 1964, Donald Horne noted the lack of “quality” daily or Sunday newspapers in Australia, observing that:

\begin{quote}
…the casting up of new concepts of how things are going is very rare; even regular background information and interpretation is hard to come by; there are few possibilities for sustained and rigorous debate on new problems; few journalists can take the time to follow a story to the point of significance…the result is that images of Australian life usually fall into crude stereotypes.\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

By way of context, it should be noted that Horne published this at a time when newspapers were still the dominant source of news and opinion for the Australian public. In fact, there was probably more “quality” print journalism in the Australian broadsheet press at that time than there is in the contemporary period. Further, in the same year as the publication of \textit{The Lucky Country} – 1964 – \textit{The Australian} newspaper commenced publication, with the publicly stated objective of being a quality national broadsheet, a newspaper of record. In 1970, the weekly alternative newspaper, \textit{Nation Review}, was launched. Despite Horne’s understandable concerns,

\textsuperscript{161} ibid.
the press in Australia was about to enter a period of rich journalistic activity – certainly in comparison with the current, much more market-driven model, as newspapers battle to survive amid the competition from both broadcast and narrowcast media.

As a mode of communication, the mass media has operated within a discourse that contains its own set of codes. There was an attempt in the 1950s to codify the theories of how the media functioned and to trace their development. The three American academics involved in this study, Fred S. Seibert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, identified four principal media models: authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet Communist. The libertarian doctrine as identified by Seibert is a philosophical concept in which the media operates within the principles of liberalism. The basic philosophy of liberalism is founded on reason, rationality and truth. A libertarian press model is one in which the media is free to function without interference or censorship, whether it is from government or some other interest (church etc.). Seibert et al found that the libertarian model was the primary “Western” democratic model that is most commonly associated with English speaking democracies. Nevertheless, the libertarian model has been criticised as being too confusing as a contemporary model of reference. Patrick Plaisance argues that the libertarian model of media, based on the principles of twentieth-century liberalism, is overly reliant on its foundational moralising ethic.

166 ibid.
167 It should be noted that the whole idea of “truth” has been problematised since the poststructuralist turn, and certainly since Foucault. The problematising of truth is part of a broader critique of the whole Enlightenment project. It was inevitable that the 1950s model of libertarian journalism would be subject to critique once poststructuralist principles became the dominant influence on scholarly work in the humanities, social sciencea, arts and media.
168 Seibert, p.51.
169 ibid.
Anthony Pratkanis observes that in the communication of ideas and beliefs, the dominant hierarchy of meaning is, crucially, dominated by a few power groups whose voice represents “a truth”: through the sustained use of repetition, they usually seek to make their “truth” an accepted “fact”.\(^{171}\) Considering the influence that News Limited has exercised over the media landscape in Australia, it is necessary to determine whether the federal government has had any tangible influence over what can be seen, heard or read in the media, regardless of how subtle its sway may be.

Previous research into representations of Muslims in the Australian media post-2001 has been quite selective in its scope, primarily focusing on the media’s portrayal of Muslims and Islam while generally overlooking any possible impact political discourse may have had on the media commentary. There is also insufficient coverage of the Howard Government’s undeclared “war on values”\(^{172}\) and its attempted reconstruction of Australian identity.\(^{173}\) As part of these ideological “battles” members of the Howard Government, including the Prime Minister, utilised the accepted political tactic of using the media to criticise any ideology that deviated from the Coalition’s own conservative creed.

In the next section I examine media reporting before and after the events of 2001, with particular emphasis on media representations of Muslim-related news stories.

### 2.2 Media in Australia prior to and in the aftermath of 2001

Much of the literature on media representations of Muslims in Australia has focused on the perpetuation of Orientalist stereotypes. Said notes that Western Orientalist representations of the Middle East perpetuate “collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are actually quite diverse”.\(^{174}\) These collective identities operate as

\(^{171}\) Pratkanis, p. 2.
stereotypes that do not reflect national, cultural and social realities.\textsuperscript{175}

There is a considerable body of research\textsuperscript{176} concerning media representation of Muslims in Australia, since the arrival of the Tampa and the attacks of September 11 in 2001. Media representation of the September 11 tragedy consolidated the historically inherited representation of Islam as a “backward, oppressive and uncivilised religion in stark contrast to the progressive and dynamic West”.\textsuperscript{177} The discourse on Muslims or Arabs in the Australian media has since evolved to subsume a range of discourses while maintaining an underlying message that Islam is resistant to the secular, and at odds with the principles of liberal democracy.\textsuperscript{178} These media constructs have the ability to increase negative emphasis on the differences between “us” (that is, “we” Australians) and “them” (that is, “those” Muslims).\textsuperscript{179}

The Australian trade union and professional association for arts and media workers, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), defines the fundamental principles of journalism as being “respect for the truth and the public’s right to information”.\textsuperscript{180} The MEAA states that, without trust, journalists do not “fulfill their public responsibilities”.\textsuperscript{181} Nevertheless, journalists can sometimes approach their news subjects with a certain degree of preconceived bias. John Henningham, in a study of the attitudes of journalists towards a range of newsworthy subjects, found a number of inconsistencies. Henningham discovered that journalists were mostly in favour of capitalism even if ideologically they were to the left on, for example, issues

\textsuperscript{175} ibid, p.18.
\textsuperscript{178} ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} T. V. Patil, “‘You can’t have the struggle without the ugly fringe’ - Publicness in Australian National Imagination: Media representations of the Muslim demonstrations in Sydney in 2012”, \textit{Continuum}, Vol. 29, Issue 1, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{180} “Code of Ethics”, \textit{Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance},
\textsuperscript{181} ibid.
of social significance. More importantly, Henningham found that journalists were often hostile to any form of organised religion. The perception of journalistic objectivity can have the potential to affect how the public responds to media coverage of a news event, even though Henningham’s research problematises the extent to which the public should hold that perception.

Said notes that one of the things that sets the Orient apart from the West in Orientalist discourse is the recurring motif of insinuated danger. Islam has long been seen as a constant danger which, Said observes, came to symbolise a terror and peril that European civilisation incorporated into its psyche. In the initial period after 9/11 the media played a substantial part in formulating the information and attitudes that would shape the opinions of the public, both in relation to the event itself and towards the perpetrators of the act, with discourse that often involved a religious and cultural dimension. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks the media in the USA framed the event as an assault on the values of democracy and liberalism with the effect of rallying “collective identity and solidarity among American citizens”. In her scholarly analysis of the Australian media’s representation of the 9/11 attacks, Samina Yasmeen suggests that the “Australian media replicated the discourse of [American] national identity for an Australian audience”. Yasmeen found that framing the events of 9/11 through a “nationalist” discourse was a common theme in reporting in English language media. Yasmeen also observes that the media in Australia experienced a significant increase in patronage with Australian newspapers recording massive increases in circulation of up to “45 per cent in the immediate aftermath of the attacks suggesting that the event figured dominantly as a matter of public interest”.

\[\text{References:}\]
\[\text{183} \text{ ibid.}\]
\[\text{184} \text{ Said, 2003, p. 57.}\]
\[\text{185} \text{ ibid. p. 60.}\]
\[\text{186} \text{ Yasmeen, p. 79.}\]
\[\text{187} \text{ ibid.}\]
\[\text{188} \text{ ibid.}\]
\[\text{189} \text{ ibid.}\]
2.3 Australian media representations of Muslims and Islam

Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism, its misunderstandings and misrepresentations, and the positioning of the Orient as the “Other”, was a common theme in much of the examined literature. The factors which Luyendijk identified in media organisations’ construction of news stories about the Middle East focused on the “ideology…ignorance and prejudice [which] still reinforces stereotypes”.\(^{190}\) Luyendijk found that these factors occur even when a correspondent is “hypersensitive to the pitfalls of ethnocentrism and orientalism”.\(^{191}\)

In *Orientalism* Said observed how the negative discourse regarding Muslims in the West was historical.\(^ {192}\) A number of surveyed texts focused on how media representations of Muslims predated the events of 2001. Said’s criticism of Orientalism informs Halim Rane’s examination of the historical context of Orientalist representations in Australian media reporting, and whether there was a deeper cause of “Islamophobia” in media coverage. Rane’s research focused on media coverage in the period prior to 11 September 2001, primarily those stories appearing in News Limited’s *The Australian* from 1996 to 1999.\(^{193}\) He suggests that the media in Australia have been a significant contributing factor to the public’s increasingly negative perceptions of Muslims.\(^ {194}\) Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason also investigate anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia and the UK in the period prior to 11 September 2001.\(^ {195}\) They observe that Islamophobia is based in discourses that can be explained in relation to Said’s critique of Orientalism, with the fear of the “Other” being part of a xenophobic progression which, since the 1980s, has moved from an anti-Asian to anti-Arab and finally an anti-Muslim prejudice. Poynting and Mason use the fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989, the Gulf War in 1990-91, and other events


\(^{191}\) ibid.

\(^{192}\) Said, 2003, p. 18.

\(^{193}\) Rane, 2000, p. 2.

\(^{194}\) ibid, p. 3.

up until 10 September 2001 as the touchstone flashpoints for their analysis. In *Caravanserai: A Journey Among Australian Muslims*, Hanifa Deen examines how, in the period after the First Gulf War in 1991 and following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, Muslims began to perceive that they were being constructed as the new “threat” to Western hegemony. Deen writes that this was also the case in this country, for “around Australia, Muslims – butchers, bakers, academics, the young, the old and the unemployed – are convinced that now Communism is no longer the ‘enemy’, Islam has become the new global enemy”.

Said found that Orientalism is a corporate institution whose purpose is to maintain accepted representations of the Orient by making statements, authorising views, and describing it in specific ways. Since 2000, there have been a number of research projects regarding the role the media plays in maintaining Muslim and Islamic stereotypes, both globally and in Australia. Asha Bedar’s *Media Guide: Islam & Muslims in Australia* details several key characteristics of Muslim representations in the Australian media. Bedar analyses the “continuing articulation of the Muslims-Islam-Terrorism triangle”, pointing out that “Muslims and Islam only appear in the media to the extent that they are assumed to be of interest to non-Muslims”. Nahid Kabir examines how Muslims are constructed within the Australian media and how these representations perpetuate existing prejudices. Through a series of case studies Kabir analyses how prevailing media attitudes towards Muslim Australians disadvantage them both socially and economically. Kabir concludes that media representations of Muslims emphasise “Otherness” rather than inclusiveness. Tejaswini Patil and Gretchen Marie Ennis use critical discourse analysis to examine how the media deploys “manipulative silences” to stereotype Muslims who attempt to

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196 ibid.
197 Deen, p. 216.
198 Said, 2003, p. 3.
200 Bedar, p. 50.
201 ibid.
join the fight in Syria as “bad Australians”. Patil and Ennis analyse reporting from the standpoint that Muslims are represented as “different” in media discourse, with this differentiation frequently arrived at through silencing. They argue that the media use silence to omit information that is relevant to the subject at hand. Peter Manning draws on Said’s theory of “Othering” to examine the ways in which the media construct representations of the Muslim community. Manning tries to place media representations of Arabs and Muslims into a historical context where traditional Western cultural conceptions about Orientalist stereotypes are reproduced.

In their analysis of discourses concerning the role of Muslim women in Australian society, Tanja Dreher and Christina Ho observe that in the aftermath of 2001, “persecuted Muslim women became and remain pivotal to the ideological and emotional case for the war in Afghanistan and Iraq”.

Shahram Akbarzadeh and Bianca Smith note a marked increase in instances of behaviours and representations classified as “Islamophobic”. These occurrences were found to be especially prevalent among Australian Muslim women, particularly those who chose to wear visible forms of traditional Muslim clothing such as the hijab.

The higher profile of Muslim women who wear the headscarf was reflected in media coverage between 2001 and 2007. Akbarzadeh and Smith observe that, in news articles dealing with the coverage of Islam in the Australian media, gender-related issues accounted for nearly 10 per cent of the news stories in the sample. The majority of these news articles dealt with the hijab in a negative context, with the

204 ibid.
205 Manning, p. 16.
206 Dreher and Ho, p. 228.
207 S. Akbarzadeh & B. Smith, “Extract from The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media” (The Age and Herald Sun Newspapers), Monash University, Melbourne, November 2005, p. 8.
208 ibid.
Orientalist stereotype of the male dominated subservient female being a key part of the media narrative.\textsuperscript{209}

The failure of the media in Australia in the post-Howard era to report objectively on stories dealing with Muslims, to contextualise such stories or to create a dialogue based on inclusiveness, has been examined in a number of recent studies. In \textit{Islam and the Australian News Media}\textsuperscript{210} Halim Rane, Jacqui Ewart and Mohammad Abdalla examine the negative impact that Australian media reporting on Islam and Muslims had on intercommunity relations up to 2010.\textsuperscript{211} Rane et al. analysed media coverage post-Howard Government, finding that negative representations of Muslims continued in reporting during the Rudd Government. Tejaswini Patil notes that media reporting used events such as the “Sydney riot” in 2012 to continue the discourse which characterises Muslims as “extremists and fundamentalists”.\textsuperscript{212} Nora Amath examines the role of Muslims as minorities in Western society, finding that the predominant media discourse about Muslims in Australia continues to be one of “fundamentalism, radicalisation, militancy and terrorism”.\textsuperscript{213}

\section*{2.4 Politicians’ Attitudes towards Australian Muslims and Islam}

Said observed that the political societies of Britain, France and the USA imparted a sense of urgency to their civil societies, stressing the significance of development and thereby ensuring an ongoing process of modernisation.\textsuperscript{214} Orientalism is marked by an unquestioning acceptance of this imperative for constant development, which was contrasted with the political and social lethargy attributed to the Orient.\textsuperscript{215} Tariq Amin-Khan notes that this discourse has re-emerged to spread swiftly in Western nations since September 11, 2001, reproducing an unquestioned assumption of the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{209} ibid.
\bibitem{211} ibid, p. 185.
\bibitem{212} T. Patil, "You can’t have the struggle without the ugly fringe’ - Publicness in Australian National Imagination: Media representations of the Muslim demonstrations in Sydney in 2012", \textit{Continuum}, Vol. 29 Issue 1, 2015. pp. 57-69.
\bibitem{214} Said, 2003, p. 11.
\bibitem{215} ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
supremacy of Western secularism that underpins the vilification of Muslims. Runa Das draws on Said’s work to argue that in the discourse of Orientalism, the non-West is constructed out of a hierarchically guided “moral-political admonishment” by the West, and stereotyped as different from the West. Since September 11 this has allowed Muslims to be viewed through the prism of both fear and contempt.

Political rhetoric in the period after 2001, whether deliberately or unintentionally, has reinforced negative associations with Muslims. In “Muslim Communities: Their Voice in Australia’s Anti-Terrorism Law and Order Policy”, Waleed Aly argues that since 2001 Muslim populations have become “involuntarily and artificially politicised identities”. Aly observes that this has now become a situation where it is “increasingly unthinkable that Australian Muslims might be chaotically diverse human beings”. He describes Muslims as having been re-imagined as members of a “political party called Islam; one that in Australia at least is perpetually in opposition”.

In Orientalism Said argues that political engagement with the “Oriental” was undertaken through a prism of pride and arrogance. This produced a standardisation of ideas that in turn resulted in what Said describes as a polarisation of rhetoric. Political rhetoric played a similar role in inflaming anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia following 2001. Michális S. Michael specifically investigates the Howard Government’s responses to tensions between Islam and the West since 11 September 2001. He examines the impact that government statements and policies had on Australia as a multicultural society. Michael is especially critical of the Howard Government’s approach.

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219 ibid.
220 ibid.
222 ibid, p. 13.
Government’s attempt to deal with Australian Muslims as if they are a homogenous rather than diverse community.\textsuperscript{224} John Warhurst also finds that, following 2001, the Howard Government’s pronouncements about Judaeo-Christianity as the centrepiece of Australian values and identity only served to increase the isolation and alienation of Muslims from other Australians.\textsuperscript{225} Warhurst stresses that on a number of occasions senior government figures, such as Treasurer Peter Costello, drew implicit negative comparisons between Islam and Christianity.\textsuperscript{226} Even if political commentary strives to differentiate between the actions of terrorists and Muslims; there is still the potential for negative representations through the association of Islam with terrorism. Pete Lentini’s study found that political rhetoric has the potential, even if unintentionally, to demonise Muslims in Australia.\textsuperscript{227}

In a democracy, the purpose of a robust media is to keep police, business and government honest.\textsuperscript{228} In \textit{God under Howard}\textsuperscript{229} Marion Maddox examines how the Howard Government used the media to promote a permanent sense of fear, smearing any critique of its policies as left-wing political correctness.\textsuperscript{230} Jacqui Ewart has examined how political decisions, when made in an environment of fear and in combination with an initially supportive media, can feed into already existing anxieties.\textsuperscript{231} Ewart analyses how, rather than fully investigate whether the case against Dr Haneef was being presented accurately, at the outset the media accepted the facts as given, using erroneous information from politicians and police. David Solomon analyses how the major newspapers in Australia positioned themselves throughout the 2001 election, finding that the majority of the newspapers supported the Coalition

\textsuperscript{224} ibid.
\textsuperscript{226} ibid.
\textsuperscript{228} C. Harrington, “The People Don’t Speak and the Powerful Don’t Listen”, \textit{The Courier Mail}, 4 December 2009, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{230} ibid.
\textsuperscript{231} Ewart, 2009, p. 18.
even though it was evident that the government was cynically using the public’s fear at the expense of the Muslims in Australia.\textsuperscript{232}

Tanja Dreher proposes that current scrutiny of Muslims and Islam began prior to the events of 9/11 with growing concerns among certain sections of Australian society, media and political hierarchy about a rise in “ethnic crime”. Those existing concerns coincided with the arrival of the MV Tampa off north-west Australia. Dreher discusses how the discursive linking of local, national and global news stories contributed to a “spiral of signification” in which events, which were often unrelated to Muslims or Islam, were still linked in media discourse through the associative involvement of people who were categorised as “Middle Eastern”, “Muslim” or “Arab”.\textsuperscript{233} Dreher looks at how the dominant discourses of “culture” and “community” provide both possibilities and limitations for “media interventions into racialised news reporting”.\textsuperscript{234}

The lack of distinction when reporting on different social and ethnic groups, combined with the simplification of issues, contributed to the creation and perpetuation of Orientalist stereotypes.

\textbf{2.5 Overview of the Literature Survey}

There is no question that since 2001 here has been a rise in anti-Muslim racism in Western societies. This has been significantly impelled by the Western media’s coverage of Muslims and the demonisation of Islam along Orientalist lines across Europe, North America and Australia.\textsuperscript{235} Said’s critique of Orientalism is a critique of the mystifications, distortions and generalisations produced by European depiction, or representation, of the Orient.\textsuperscript{236} The literature I have analysed tends to share a recognition that post-2001 the media had become increasingly reliant on conventional

\textsuperscript{232} Solomon in Ewart, p. 231
\textsuperscript{234} Howley, p. 148.
\textsuperscript{236} Farris, p. 270.
Orientalist notions and constructs when reporting on Muslims and Islam. This is a common, recurring theme in the surveyed literature.

In the following chapter I explain the methodological basis for my own work on this upsurge in negative discourse and discuss the research methods I used. The analytical process I used in examining the collated data was content analysis.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This chapter outlines the research methods utilised in this study. I discuss the research design, sampling processes, data collection processes and data analysis strategy. A mixed qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted, and data collection and analysis techniques in sequential phases were used to address the research question: “In what ways did the Murdoch press represent Howard Government rhetoric about Muslims in Australia?”

3.1 Methodology

This research initially identified a number of possible research methodologies which could be used to analyse representations of Muslims in Australia.\(^{237}\) Deciding on the most efficient research methodology was a crucial component of the process, which required a certain degree of flexibility. As the trajectory of the study developed, and the parameters became more refined, so the analytical framework was adapted to meet the changing requirements of the work.

The core methodology is content analysis. Ole Holsti defines content analysis as a “technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages”.\(^{238}\) As an analytical tool, content analysis offered the most efficient way of gathering the required data, thereby allowing in-depth study of the primary research focus – media representations of political discourse about the Australian Muslim community. Further, content analysis offered an effective means to gain an initial insight into the tone of the relevant political discourse, and thus a valuable approach to studying this discourse and how it was reflected in the press commentary. Quantitative analysis in the form of measuring the frequency with which selected terms appeared, offered itself as a particularly useful approach to analysing the data. This made it possible to identify particular patterns in the use of language.

\(^{237}\) J. M. Twati, *Societal and Organisational Culture and the Adoption of Management Information Systems in Arab Countries*, Griffith University, Brisbane, 2007, p. 11.

My content analysis employed a combination of quantitative (measuring how often certain terms and phrases are mentioned) and qualitative (examining the meaning and context of this language use) approaches. Practitioners and academics have stressed the benefits of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. Gary Bouma argues that the employment of more than one process improves the strength and value of the information collected.\textsuperscript{239} For Todd Jicks, quantitative and qualitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than rival camps in research design. He emphasises the desirability of mixed methods, given the weaknesses that can arise in the use of single methods.\textsuperscript{240} Marilyn White and Emily Marsh note that when content analysis draws appropriately on both qualitative and quantitative research methods, it becomes a systematic, rigorous approach to analysing documents.\textsuperscript{241} According to Klaus Krippendorff, as a research technique content analysis offers researchers a tool from which they can make replicable and valid inferences from texts, or other meaningful materials, to the contexts of their use.\textsuperscript{242} Despite some reservations about its limitations as a research framework, John Dumay and Linlin Cai find that as a research methodology content analysis offers ample opportunities for practitioners of data analysis to obtain valuable outcomes.\textsuperscript{243}

Content analysis requires consideration of how language is positioned within texts and what significance is to be ascribed to the language in the overall context of the discourse. In this study, this need was partly met by drawing on certain aspects of theories of critical literacy, including special focus on the encoding of the language used in the texts. The analysis of discourse was further enhanced by a systematic evaluation of the texts to test the consistency of certain language, thereby verifying whether particular trends occurred more frequently during periods of relative political intensity.

\textsuperscript{240} T. D. Jicks, “Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action”, \textit{Administrative Science Quarterly}, vol. 24, no. 4, December 1979, Cornell University.
In investigating collated data I employed both a deductive (moving from the more general to the specific) and inductive (moving from specific observations to broader generalisations) approach to analysis. The use of the inductive method allowed for the gathering of data, followed by a search for the appearance of patterns in this data, with a general theory then being developed. The deductive approach inverted the process using the same elements: an analysis and coding of the data informed by previous literature and research. As part of using these processes any new data driven concepts and themes were also identified, which were then applied to the collated data from News Limited newspapers. Thus the use of inductive and deductive processes enabled the emergence of opportunities for reflection and reflexivity.

3.3 Scope of Study

When researching Western representations of Islam, Edward Said identified the very large archive that such a study would generate, and the need to cut it down to manageable proportions.\textsuperscript{244} In the wake of my initial review of the literature, I quickly became aware of the same issue, despite setting out to undertake a much more limited project to examine the discursive positioning of Islam in the media in an Australian context. This led me to further delimit the scope of the analysis through the choice of sources of primary data (the three Murdoch newspapers in the Australian east coast capital cities plus \textit{The Australian}) in a particular period (2001 to 2007); through focusing on certain case studies (Sheik Hilali, Dr Haneef, the hijab); and through the methods to be used in managing and analysing that data, in particular, the use of content analysis. In the rest of this chapter I undertake further discussion of the choice of media, terms for case studies and means used to contextualise the case studies.

The content analysis enabled me to illustrate whether there was an identifiable increase in the frequency of stories during periods of heightened media scrutiny such as an election year or in association with particular crises and controversies. Studying the content of specific newspapers for each year during the “post 9/11” years of the Howard Government also facilitated an examination of whether state-based news

\textsuperscript{244} Said, 2003, p.24.
stories, such as the events surrounding Dr Mohamed Haneef in Queensland or Sheik Hilali in New South Wales, generated equivalent degrees of coverage on a national level. Further, it could show whether there had been a privileging of particular terms over others.245

Thus, the spatial and temporal limits I placed on the scope of this study in fact allowed me to develop particular understandings. Geographically, the project focused solely on information gathered from, and relating to, Australia, and within that, primarily the eastern states, which enabled the comparative content analysis mentioned above. The timeline commencing after 11 September, 2001 obviously enabled depth coverage of a period when political and media representations of Muslims were at their most numerous and, perhaps, most excessive. The year 2007 was selected as the closing point for the analysis because it was at that year’s federal election that the Howard Government was voted out of office.

3.3.1 Choice of media

Despite the wide range of media that could be drawn on for this analysis, the availability over time of the source material was a key consideration in choosing which form of media to target. By focusing on print newspapers I ensured that the study could access the required data in a historically stable form even if digitised since original publication. An important facet of this research was the selection of the newspaper format – whether I would use the more “prestige” broadsheet newspapers or their tabloid counterparts. I decided to focus on a combination of the two formats from the one proprietor. The benefit of this approach was the comprehensive nature of the data and different perspectives available from the two formats; it was felt that the “prestige” broadsheets more accurately represented the views of the political elites while the tabloids were more reflective of the broader concerns of the average Australian. The study initially surveyed newspaper coverage of political commentary over an eight-week period from the date when the story first broke in the media. This period was determined to be when the main media interest in the story would be. However, in certain circumstances the period of primary data collection needed to be

more flexible. An example of this was the detention of Dr Haneef: the majority of the generated data was produced in a four week period beginning with his arrest and concluding with his release from custody. Nevertheless, if any other point of interest developed within the story like Sheik Hilali’s final resignation as Grand Mufti or Dr Haneef’s return to Australia, any new data generated was also taken into consideration for possible relevance to the study. The process of the eight-week period likewise offered a collation of political commentary during the period in the form of media releases and doorstop interviews, allowing a study of media coverage to ascertain the tone of the reporting. This method showed whether there was a dominant political voice in this discourse, what type of language was used and whether it targeted Muslims.

Modern journalism operates within a complex plurality of rival agendas, including the pressures of commerce, which can have negative impacts on journalistic values such as objectivity. While television and the Internet provide a great deal of information globally, it remains the case in Australia that newspapers are among the most significant and respected sources of information and commentary. As noted earlier, this is demonstrated by the increase in newspaper circulation at times of major crisis, such as after September 11, 2001. Their importance as influencers of public opinion, and their potential as sources for a manageable sample of archived texts for analysis, further enhances the appropriateness of newspapers as the focus for this study.

Due to the pervasive nature of its publications on the local and international landscape, the dominant force in Australian newspaper publishing is Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited. As a media outlet News Limited accounts for around “two-thirds of Australian metropolitan daily press circulation”. Further, it is clear that “the Murdoch press” frequently takes a stance that is overtly inflected to particular political viewpoints. The principal focus for this analysis became, therefore, the major east coast tabloid newspapers, Sydney’s The Daily Telegraph, Brisbane’s The Courier

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Mail, and Melbourne’s Herald Sun, as well as the national broadsheet The Australian, all owned by News Limited. The tabloids can be taken to represent the three major cities along Australia’s eastern seaboard (Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane) and, therefore, its primary urban population centres. The Australian is consumed in the same cities (no doubt by a different readership) as well as in regional centres and other capital cities – that is, it has a genuinely national circulation.

A factor that had the potential to be problematic in analysing the collated data was the issue of networked copy and repetition of news stories across the surveyed newspapers. Careful attention was paid to means of ensuring that there was no doubling of data. After some consideration, I decided that the most efficient way to deal with syndication of stories was a simple process of cross-checking of date, reporter and by-line. This process was used to eliminate, as much as possible, unnecessary repetition of collected articles and data.

3.4 Ethical considerations

All research raises ethical considerations, especially when dealing with sensitive areas such as religion and with the reputations of individuals in the public sphere; however this research did not require formal ethical clearance. The primary material examined as part of this study was already in the public domain, which removed questions relating to the privacy of the subjects or the confidentiality of the data.

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248 It is important to note that the Courier Mail was a broadsheet for a long time, and only changed format in 2006. However, even though the Courier Mail was broadsheet in format, it tended to be more “tabloid” in how it managed its content than the other broadsheets at the time – Australian, Sydney Morning Herald, Age, Advertiser. Thus, its change to tabloid format did not meet with the same reader resistance as, say, the later change of the Herald, whose readers didn’t want tabloid associations with their newspaper.
3.5 Establishing the parameters: search terms, allied terms and variables

Given the project’s concern with representations of Islam in the reporting of political discourse, the most appropriate starting point for content analysis was an initial trawl of the selected Murdoch newspapers from 2001-2007, using the broad terms “politicians”, “Howard Government”, “Australia”, “media”, “Islam” and “Muslim”. From this trawl, it emerged that the most frequently recurring use of the terms “Islam” and/or “Muslims” in the period under study were in stories concerned with the Grand Mufti of Australia and Imam of Lakemba mosque, Sheik Hilali; the arrest and detention of Dr Haneef; and public controversy about the wearing and/or potential banning of the hijab. These clearly presented as useful case studies and “Sheik Hilali”, “Dr Haneef” and “hijab” were therefore selected as primary terms to be used in narrowing and deepening the content analysis.

While these three terms offered themselves as case studies due to their prevalence in the political and newspaper discourses of the period (that is, the frequency of their usage), they also need to be considered within the broader canvas of the political, social and media climate. Therefore, other themes, terms and events are also drawn into my analysis and discussion as appropriate in order to frame and contextualise my depth discussion of what is revealed by the case study terms. For example, there were a number of sub-themes that were frequently connected with these three primary terms and thus examined in conjunction with them, most notably “burqa”, “niqab” and “terrorist/terrorism”. While these terms did not constitute a direct focus for the analytical survey, they were understood to be clearly relevant to the research. The data analysis program made use of a ten-word radiance from each selected term to allow a mapping of the relationships between these terms, thereby enabling me to gauge the context as well as the frequency of their usage. This meant that when examining newspaper reporting a term such as “terrorist” could be placed within a certain context, such as a comment made by a politician.

The use of language in contemporary media can vary between superfluous “feel good” news stories to those that are overly deferential to the existing dominant paradigm. Linguistics scholar Charles Larson found that there are three primary
dimensions of language usage: the semantic dimension that encapsulates all the possible meanings for a word; the functional dimension, which deals with the various jobs that words can do such as naming or modifying; and the thematic dimension that covers the feel and texture of words. Although this study utilised all three dimensions, it was primarily interested in the first two, the semantic and the functional dimensions. In an investigation into language usage by politicians and the media, it was important to take account of variables, regardless of whether the usage was negative or positive.

Early in the research it became clear that there were certain variables that had to be addressed, most obviously in relation to the decision to select search terms that would form the basis of case studies of individuals – Sheik Hilali and Dr Haneef. These variables included the positioning of religion in the reporting of the news stories. It became an embedded feature of the methodology that one of the questions I considered in each area of investigation was the extent to which any instance of news reporting on Sheik Hilali, Dr Haneef or the hijab was based on questions of religious affiliation rather than the actual concurrent facts of the case or issue. Sheik Hilali’s dual positions of Grand Mufti and Imam of Lakemba mosque meant that in the coverage of his October 2006 sermon, Islam was inevitably going to play a certain identifiable role in the evolving discourse. What was important was the significance of this religious affiliation to the coverage, how it was contextualised and whether it was derogatory. In the case of Dr Haneef, however, religion was less obviously treated and less clearly defined, which suggests that the importance given to religion was not as obviously in operation in relation to newsworthiness.

3.6 Sourcing the data

Since the analysis was to be focused through the particular cases of Sheik Hilali, Dr Haneef and the hijab, the overall scope of the study was limited to items dealing directly with each of these cases, which required a discerning selection process to audit the catalogued pieces. The most efficient method of retrieving relevant items

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was through the storage database files held by the respective media outlets, which are accessed via their Internet sites.

Given my concentration on four News Limited newspapers, the most useful database was www.newstext.com.au. Owned by News Limited, Newstext lists all the News Limited newspaper publications, with their on-line print archives going back to the mid-1980s. Even though my initial intention was to examine stories from traditional, hard copy, print media, due to the nature of this otherwise particularly effective database, it became more efficient for the term “print media” to be taken to refer to news reported on by the target newspapers, regardless of whether that was in a hard copy or online format. I have referred already to the means used to avoid double counting in the quantitative aspect of the content analysis. One minor problem in utilising the Newstext website for direct quotations is that, as an online database, it does not always provide the relevant citable page number. Thus, while due care was taken to undertake full citation, this was not always possible.

The database Factiva also provided online access to news information and full archival text coverage of news articles. As with Newstext, the Factiva search parameters were set to examine the “Full Article”. The “search” function of Factiva was also used to access a database of newspaper articles, with the search parameters not only being set around key terms but also a time frame. This was used in conjunction with the Australian National Library, which was accessed as a document source through its free online search service, Trove.

The data gathered from the surveyed newspapers were collated; a codified classification system was then used to place the assembled data into the categories of “Sheik Hilali”, “Dr Haneef” and “hijab”. These categories were then organised into different themes (for example, “threat”, “terror” and “values”). The data was assembled into a number of subcategories including their language context and whether they used terms such as “Muslim” and “Islam”. Data was also grouped depending on the context and the speaker. In analysing political commentary about the hijab, the category of gender was used to check for variations in reporting and whether there was a greater emphasis on a “feminine” over a “masculine” discourse in the coverage. This gender categorisation was noteworthy in political commentary
about Dr Haneef where the discourse was primarily “masculine”. This was in contrast to comments by male politicians about the hijab where the discourse was “feminine” (the majority of commentary about the hijab being generated by female politicians). These subcategories were determined by the research question and the literature that had been already analysed.

3.6.1 Data collation software

In the interests of effective data collection and analysis, it was important to determine the most appropriate software systems for collation of the data to form the basis of content analysis. Three programs presented as having the potential to be suitable for the type of data analysis I would be undertaking. These were SPSS, Leximancer and NVivo.

Although SPSS and Leximancer have various benefits for data analysis, NVivo was clearly the most suitable and flexible program for the kind of data mining I required to support this content analysis, particularly in the area of qualitative analysis. As a research tool, NVivo emerged as both academically and economically suitable for exploring possible correlations between political discourse and media coverage because the program was able to extract and organise the selected data from the articles examined. Not only could it run query text searches to ascertain where and how the selected terms were used, NVivo was also able to show the proximity of certain terms to each other, a factor which proved to be particularly helpful when analysing terms such as “Muslim” and “terrorism”. Of great assistance in collating quantitative data was NVivo’s capacity to note word frequency. Taken together, these features meant that NVivo was capable of providing a content analysis with supporting descriptive statistical data, and also able to identify key concepts or discourses when they occurred within a text, as well as where these discourses stood in relation to others in the text. Further, NVivo was used to catalogue the number, length, and detailed nature of the collected data. The research findings were therefore gathered from a content analysis based in NVivo functions, drawing on a collation of all items relating to the selected subjects from the chosen newspapers in the period under study.
3.7 Discourses of Fear

The selective nuances of a language are reciprocated when applied through political or media discourse where one specific target group may gather a far greater meaning from not only what has been said, but also how and when it has been said. That is, certain sections of the media audience respond more powerfully to certain usages when they have come to recognise those usages as carrying a particularly powerful bundle of associations for them. Such use of code words and phrases have come to be referred to as “dog-whistle politics”, a term which, significantly, first emerged in Australia during the Howard years\textsuperscript{250}. Dog-whistle politics can be described as a use of language which contains “a concealed, coded, or unstated idea, usually divisive or politically dangerous, nevertheless understood by the intended voters”\textsuperscript{251}. Undoubtedly, the media play a significant role in channelling and amplifying dog-whistle politics, with the daily news cycle creating an atmosphere in which apparently benign statements can avoid critical attention and in-depth scrutiny\textsuperscript{252}. The use of dog-whistle politics serves to perpetuate already held fears and prejudices, and their usage by certain media commentators and a number of high profile politicians has in the past had the potential to “reinforce racial, religious and cultural intolerance”\textsuperscript{253}. In undertaking the content analysis, it was particularly important that I remain alert to the kinds of words and phrases that were functioning as “dog-whistling” in the articles I sourced. The Howard Government made use of terms and phrases to maintain an atmosphere of fear following 2001, with the language primarily being directed at Muslims. When the Tampa arrived off Christmas Island on the 26 August 2001, the Howard Government discourse was one of action against “people smugglers” and “illegal immigrants”\textsuperscript{254}. The federal government’s language use became focused on protecting the Australia’s borders. Prime Minister Howard and Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock did not refer to the people on the Tampa as “refugees” but instead

\textsuperscript{250} The term has since also been used in a number of international contexts, notably Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.
\textsuperscript{253} ibid.
called them “illegal arrivals”, thereby positioning the asylum seekers as a “threat”. When he discussed the arrival of the Tampa and the claimed “children overboard” incident in October 2001, Howard spoke about the importance of “security” and the issue of “border protection”. The use of these terms implicitly associated those arriving on boats with the “war on terror”. These two news stories, and the government’s version of events, made the front pages of every major Australian newspaper. The Howard Government was positioned as being “tough” on national security while the Opposition was painted as being “weak”. Also of great significance was how these events dominated other potentially damaging news stories, allowing the Howard Government to set the agenda for the upcoming election. The Coalition had set the campaign agenda with their slogan, “Who’ll make the tough decisions?” while Labor was obliged to respond with a promise to provide “Security abroad and security at home”. Another key phrase that John Howard used was “Australian values”, with these values being linked to Australian identity. Howard’s pronouncements about Judaeo-Christianity as the centrepiece of Australian values and identity served to increase the isolation and alienation of marginalised groups, especially Muslim communities, from other Australians.

### 3.8 Problems of Translation

For this study, the key issue with translation was in relation to comments made as part of Sheik Hilali’s sermon at Lakemba mosque in October 2006. Once his comments had been published by The Australian, and following the resulting political and media outcry, the sheik blamed a faulty translation of his speech which – he alleged –

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256 This was a political controversy in which the Howard Government claimed that asylum seekers who were trying to reach Australia by sea had thrown children overboard in an attempt to gain secure rescue and passage to Australia.
distorted the original intention of his sermon (see Appendix B). An incapacity to communicate in a different language can often prove to be a barrier when new immigrants attempt to settle into a country that doesn’t share their first spoken tongue; a problem that Sheik Hilali argued had served to exaggerate the confusion surrounding his comments. Sheik Hilali and his supporters questioned the veracity of The Australian newspaper’s reporting of his Lakemba sermon along with other comments that he allegedly made. On a number of occasions, Sheik Hilali publicly stated that the translation of his sermon misrepresented what he said and the context of how the sermon was reported failed to faithfully represent his intended meaning.263

The English language translation of Sheik Hilali’s sermon was selected as a corroborating source of information for this analysis. Even though there would be some analytical benefit from being able to compare the accuracy of the English language translation with the original Arabic script, the media coverage and resultant political discourse were primarily based on the English language version. As my hypothesis is concerned with media representations of political discourse, it was necessary to maintain consistency within the study by focusing on the English language text. The problems associated when attempting to translate between English and Arabic can also prove to be potentially more vexing than simply the correct spelling of nouns. In the case of Sheik Hilali, the central issue was that there was an analysis of written texts (the newspaper articles) that were reacting against another written text (the transcript of Sheik Hilali’s sermon) that was a transcription of a speech that was given in another language (Arabic), a language on which most media and political commentators are unqualified to comment. However, even though grammatical classes and categories are likely to differ from one language to the next, the framework of the basic outline of discourse and meaning will be “relatively constant”.264

Translation quality can also prove to be potentially problematic and play a significant role in creating doubt over fidelity of meaning. This can lead to questions regarding

264 Edwards et al., p. 250.
the form of chosen analysis and whether the data had been translated in “words, phrases, sentences or larger units”. In comparison to a written text, when the discourse takes the form of spoken interaction, the terminology being used is essentially transitory unless it has been recorded. There is also a continual textual reflex in any form of verbal discourse, and in any transcription little of the verbal discourse “is actually made textually manifest”. One of the key issues that has proven to be problematic when examining discourses between the Muslim (and especially the Arabic speaking) community and the wider Australian community is the question of semantics. What this refers to is whether the meaning of a word, phrase or even statement can accurately be reproduced in the lexicon of another language.

Stuart Campbell from the University of Western Sydney’s Language Acquisition Research Centre carried out a study of translator training for the Arabic language in Australia, with the findings of the research identifying that the main difficulty in translating from a source text into a second language was in the comprehension of the source text. When either translating or transliterating a spoken or written text from Arabic to English, the presence of sounds unknown in European languages make it very difficult to settle on an accepted method of transliteration. Campbell’s research found that in some instances a direct translation for particular words or terms, both from Arabic into English and vice versa, could not be done, and the translator had to paraphrase. While spelling of names may be standard in Arabic, when translated into English the spelling may not always be consistent. For example, there are “dots under consonants that do not exist in English and have no uniquely corresponding letter”. By focusing on the English language version of Sheik Hilali’s sermon I avoided such difficult issues regarding translation.

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267 Campbell, p. 57.
268 ibid.
269 Campbell, p. 64.
3.9 Recursive reflection on themes

As the research developed, it became clear that apart from the three key areas (Dr Haneef, hijab, Sheik Hilali) there were also a number of other groupings and subgroupings emerging from the analysis of the collated data. On reflection, they represented further sub-themes that needed to be brought back round into the analysis and discussion. While they differed across the wide scope of research, they frequently exhibited common or shared preoccupations and language associations.

These emergent themes, present across both the collated newspaper data and political discourse, often suggested a similar concern. The threat to Australian security was a recurring theme (arising in connection with the sub-theme of “terrorist”/“terrorism” identified during the collation). It became apparent in considering these emergent themes that the lexical choices made by politicians and journalists had the potential to affect how an issue or news story was framed in further coverage or reference, while the duration for which an event stayed in the “public eye” had an influence on how the thematics emerged. This factor was noted in the case against Dr Haneef in which the tone of media coverage became altered the longer the case went on. This was in direct contrast to the thematic structure of the coverage of Sheik Hilali, which remained largely negative, with pejorative comments often dominating the discourse. Some of these were identified as being dominant while others were categorised as being simply worthy of note.

The primary subthemes identified as part of this study were:

- acts (terrorism, sermon);
- values and/or beliefs (Australian, religious);
- potential menace (posed by actions/threats real or believed);
- security and legal recourse (civil rights and jurisprudence).

These subcategories in turn were linked by a common theme: the “threat” both internal and external that Muslims posed to Australian society. In this context, “threat” could be defined as both literal (perceived terrorist attack) and more abstract (a threat to a way of life). In these ways the sub-themes were also associated with
dog-whistling – with ramping up the sense of threat that the public might feel when responding to the terms used around these themes.

3.10 Conclusion

The methodological framework for this research was developed as the most appropriate for the type of analysis being undertaken, generating an examination that identified the particular discourses within a story, and then considered whether and how the discursive practices had been constructed to position and/or invite acceptance of a certain point of view.

To facilitate the study the scope of the research had to be limited to encompass only stories that were relevant to an Australian perspective, concentrating on media representations of political discourse about Muslims from 2001-2007. This was further narrowed by concentrating on the Murdoch press. In applying this system the study adopted an analytical framework that was best suited to carrying out a content analysis of the collected data. The methodology described here constituted the most effective approach to the production of findings that could be clearly articulated with a degree of confidence regarding the evidence.

The next chapter is the first case study, which examines print media representations of political discourse following Sheik Hilali’s October 2006 Ramadan speech at Lakemba mosque.
CHAPTER FOUR: AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF SHEIK TAJ EL-DIN AL-HILALI

4.1 The Lakemba sermon

The principal focus of this chapter is my examination of media reporting of political commentary dealing with the often controversial imam of Lakemba mosque, Sheik Hilali. For this analysis, which primarily focuses on a sermon given by Sheik Hilali in 2006, articles were examined from the News Limited tabloid newspapers The Courier Mail, Herald Sun and The Daily Telegraph, and the broadsheet The Australian.

In October 2006, Richard Kerbaj, a journalist at The Australian newspaper, obtained and published an English translation of a Ramadan sermon given by Sheik Hilali (see Appendix A), in which the sheik provocatively “compared immodestly dressed women to meat left out for cats, and blamed them for sexual assaults”. A large number of young men of predominantly Lebanese Sunni Muslim backgrounds attended Sheik Hilali’s mosque in Lakemba and heard his sermon. The potentially negative influence of these comments on social behaviours resulted in political and media calls for the sheik’s resignation as the Grand Mufti of Australia. In the light of the terrorist attacks in London the previous year, the sheik’s sermon was criticised by the Howard Government as another example of how “extremists” in Australian mosques were negatively influencing Muslim youths.

My analysis of the print media coverage of political rhetoric regarding Sheik Hilali during his tenure as the Grand Mufti of Australia in the period after 2001, reveals a consistently negative tone. These negative representations of Sheik Hilali reached a peak with his public condemnation following the sermon in October 2006. In the light of the sensitive nature of his comments targeting women, the negative tone of these representations was understandable. However, the frequent negative focus on Sheik

271 Rane et al., 2010. p. 124.
Hilali by the media prior to those comments raises concerns about negative representations of Muslims in Australia.\textsuperscript{272}

The conflict between Sheik Hilali’s role as imam at Lakemba mosque and his position as the Grand Mufti of Australia, as well as the confusion generated in the Australian media by these two very different positions, means that comments made in the capacity of one role (imam of a local mosque) were largely viewed by the wider community as reflecting the other role (Grand Mufti of Australia’s Muslim community).

4.2 Overview of the case of Sheik Taj El-Din Al-Hilali

As noted earlier, a serious and fundamental problem in relation to Islamic representations in Australia is that news stories relating to Muslims tend to be constructed as if they are dealing with a homogeneous rather than heterogeneous community. The stereotyping by politicians and the media of diverse ethnic and cultural groups is based on an assumption of commonality within “the Muslim community” that does not in fact exist. This lack of understanding of the diversity of Muslim identities is particularly marked in the case of Sheik Hilali and discussion about the role of the Grand Mufti of Australia.

During his tenure as the imam at Lakemba mosque, Sheik Hilali held certain allegiances in the Muslim community that were very partisan and that led to unease concerning his suitability as mufti to represent Muslims from the Arab world let alone non-Arab Muslims. An example of his partisan allegiances is the fact that Sheik Hilali, acting in the capacity of imam at Lakemba’s Sunni Lebanese mosque, was a member of the Sunni Islamist movement group Tawhid, a role he had originally held while still living in Lebanon. Tawhid, or Islamic Unity Movement, is an anti-Syrian and pro-Palestinian fundamentalist political party that was formed in the Lebanese city of Tripoli during the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{273} Tawhid militia took part in the bloody sectarian battles during that period, though it is now mostly a non-military


organisation. Sheik Hilali’s membership is of significance because it was at a time of high Tawhid militia activity in the sectarian fighting between Sunni, Shi’a and Syrian factions in Lebanon. This limited the sheik’s support and influence among Lebanese Muslims in Australia, let alone the wider Muslim communities.

Regardless of whether the role of mufti could ever truly be representative of the many different nationalities, ethnicities and sects that make up Australia’s Muslim communities, the simple fact is that from 1989 until he stepped aside in June 2007 Sheik Hilali was known as the Grand Mufti of Australia, and was thus regarded by the Australian Government and the media as “the voice of Islam in this country”.

4.3 Themes in media reporting

There is a clear theme of “threat” in the majority of the coverage of Sheik Hilali, with the term “extreme” recurring most frequently in news stories dealing with him. As a descriptive term, “extreme” (and variations of the term, like “extremism”) was identified in 39 per cent of sampled reporting between October 2006 and June 2007, with “Islamic extremism” and “intolerant extremist” being the most commonly used phrases. The use of “extreme” to describe Sheik Hilali was also found to predate his sermon at Lakemba mosque, indicating that commentary about the sheik was to an extent pre-positioned to represent his actions negatively.

A search was undertaken for newspaper articles referring to Sheik Hilali containing phrases with the terms “fundamentalist”, “extremist”, “values”, “controversy”, “terror” and “radical”, either in the headline or the lead paragraph. The Australian newspaper contained references to “fundamentalist” in a small proportion (3 per cent) of its coverage, most frequently used in direct conjunction (within a space of two words) with “interpretation” (three instances), “ideology” (two instances) and “leadership” (two instances). “Radical” and its related forms (“radicalise”, “radicalisation”, “radicalised”) were only nominally featured (4 per cent) in the articles while “extremist” was mentioned more frequently (10 per cent).

274 ibid.
“Controversy” and its related forms (“controversies”, “controversial”) were mentioned in less than one fifth (16 per cent) of articles surveyed. The derogatory use of “terror” and its variants (“terrorist”, “terrorism”) occurred in association with articles that also contained references to “Muslim” and “Islam” (26 per cent). A data search found that the term “jihad” and its related forms were used less frequently (6 per cent) than “terror” and its variants, while the terms “militants” (7 per cent) and “Wahhabi” (9 per cent) were used in these articles with an infrequent, nominal increase. As expected, references to “Muslim” (493 instances) and “Islam” (288 instances) were high within the audited articles.

A census of the three state based News Limited newspapers found that The Daily Telegraph flagged the most returns mentioning either Sheik Hilali or mufti, with “terror” and its related forms being mentioned with slightly less frequency (21 per cent) than its usage in The Australian. The Courier Mail’s use of “terror” (20 per cent) was consistent with The Daily Telegraph while the Herald Sun mentioned the term “terror” and its related forms the least (18 per cent). In newspaper coverage there was a consistent pattern in relation to the other terms (“fundamentalist”, “radical”) surveyed in these articles.

The terms “Muslim” and “Islam” were analysed to examine the total number of paragraphs in the source, the total number of words in the source, and the number and percentage of references to selected terms in the source. A sampling of 79 editions of The Australian newspaper from 26 October 2006 to 16 January 2007 found the most frequently used term was “Muslims”, which was used mainly in conjunction with “Australia” (and variations of it), with the three most often used phrasings being “Australian Muslims”, “Australia’s Muslims” and “Muslims in Australia”. As anticipated, the term “Muslim” was used in the coverage most frequently in conjunction with attacks against Sheik Hilali. The result of this was to further associate the views of the sheik with other Muslims in Australia.

Between October 2006 and January 2007, the prevailing themes of the articles published not only in The Australian but also in the other News Limited newspapers surveyed (The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun and The Courier Mail) were highly critical, not just of Sheik Hilali as an individual but the Muslim community in
Australia. There was generally no equipoise between the editorial line adopted by these newspapers and those who sought to justify his comments, while attempts to place the sheik’s sermon within a more balanced context were given a parsimonious recourse.

The articles often insinuated, through their selective use of often highly judgmental language, that the views of the Grand Mufti of Australia, particularly those stated in his controversial sermon, were also indicative of the beliefs of the wider Muslim community. A sampling of News Limited’s coverage in the two week period following Sheik Hilali’s October 2006 Lakemba sermon found that the newspapers positioned the “values” stated in the sermon as being indicative of the views of Australian Muslims in general. It was clear in relation to these mostly negative articles, that by linking Sheik Hilali with the perception of Islamic dogma, his remarks could effectively be made representative of all Muslims in Australia. Table 1 illustrates that articles dealing with both Sheik Hilali and his sermon also used the term “Muslim” consistently.

Table 1: References to Muslims in news articles reporting on Sheik Hilali’s sermon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Articles Sampled</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Australian</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courier Mail</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of The Australian, The Courier Mail, The Daily Telegraph, and Herald Sun
Note: Selected newspapers did not include weekend tabloid editions such as Queensland’s The Sunday Mail

A survey of the newspaper texts found was that the majority of news articles not only placed the story about Sheik Hilali within the wider context of Australian security and values, but also played into the wider scope of Australian politics, so that Howard Government discourse often featured prominently. A study of News Limited newspapers also ascertained that comments made by either Prime Minister John
Howard or other prominent members of the Coalition Government (such as Treasurer Peter Costello) were quoted directly or paraphrased within these articles with significant frequency. In this case, the sample demonstrated symmetry in both the political discussion and the tone of the media coverage, with the political discourse not only targeting the comments made by Sheik Hilali but also at times linking the “values” of the sermon to the wider Muslim community in Australia.

The media coverage was divided into two main categories:

- Items that referred to Howard Government initiatives in relation to the Muslim community such as the Muslim Community Reference Group, which was an organisation established by the Howard Government in the wake of the London bombings, but abolished at the end of 2006;
- Items that were critical of both Sheik Hilali and those in the Muslim community who did not disavow him

*The Australian* featured most prominently among the sampled newspapers, which was probably explained by its position as a national broadsheet and its consequent publication of longer articles and editorials. Prime Minister Howard’s comments about Sheik Hilali were examined to gauge the relative frequency of his name appearing in the nominated newspapers. As the table below shows, the Prime Minister was directly referenced 72 times in *The Australian*, while in *The Courier Mail* he was only referred to ten times. Again, *The Daily Telegraph* was somewhat greater with 24 references to Prime Minister Howard and the *Herald Sun* contained 30 references.

Sydney’s *The Daily Telegraph* featured the Prime Minister’s references to Sheik Hilali most frequently out of the three state-based newspapers (*The Courier Mail, The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun*). The disparity is understandable considering that Sheik Hilali was a resident of New South Wales. The most common terms used in conjunction with Sheik Hilali (and these terms were found to be used predominantly within in a negative context) were “Muslim”, “cleric” and “controversial”.

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A sampling of these items in *The Australian* included the Prime Minister urging the Muslim community to sack Sheik Hilali as Grand Mufti of Australia or risk a backlash from “mainstream Australians”. In an article published at the end of October 2006, Howard was quoted as stating that if this matter was not resolved quickly it would “do lasting damage to the perceptions of that [Muslim] community within the broader Australian community”.277 The Prime Minister also expressed the opinion that he personally found Sheik Hilali’s views “repugnant” and that the sheik “was not expressing Australian values”.278

### 4.3.1 Political discourse

The news stories were divided into two areas for content analysis: those that were driven by political comment, and those that were driven only by the issue and were not governed by external factors. By examining the dates of each newspaper article in the period after the political comments became “news”, a pattern formed that showed how much influence political statements had in maintaining the story in the public eye. It was also important to gauge whether these articles drew an explicit link between Sheik Hilali’s comments and Australia’s “Muslim community”.

My survey of coverage in *The Australian* and government documents from October 2006 to January 2007 revealed that the overwhelming majority of terms used in describing Sheik Hilali were critical in tone (Table 3). Indeed, over 90 per cent of all terms used to describe Sheik Hilali during this time were uncomplimentary. The

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278 ibid. p. 8.
language used by both the newspaper and politicians positioned the views of Sheik Hilali as a “threat”.

Table 3: Comparison of common terminology usage by *The Australian* and by the federal government to describe Sheik Hilali, October 2006 to January 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th><em>The Australian</em></th>
<th><em>Political</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% **</td>
<td>% **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-Australian</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outrage</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outspoken</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of newspaper articles from *The Australian*; government documents and media releases; transcripts of media and doorstop interviews; and Hansard documents in parliamentary records

*Percentage based on the survey of 80 items each taken from newspaper articles and federal government documents

** Based on all references to Sheik Hilali regardless whether he was the primary topic.

Further, in 43 per cent of articles surveyed the negative views of the mufti were reported in conjunction with “Lakemba”. This discursive linking of “Muslims, Lebanese and Middle East” with Lakemba was found to be in keeping with previous discourses regarding the Muslims of Lakemba as a “nefarious threat”. The most frequently used term used in relation to Sheik Hilali in newspaper coverage was “controversial”, with 98 per cent of the articles on the Sheik in *The Australian* using this term, compared to 67 per cent usage in government comments. The term most frequently used by members of the Howard Government, at 78 per cent, was “un-Australian”, while in *The Australian* it was used in 46 per cent of the articles. “Outrage” was used less frequently by *The Australian* (21 per cent) though government usage was considerably lower (eight per cent). While it is doubtless the case that these differences in proportional usage are largely due to the contrast

between direct comment and reportage, it is nevertheless the case that, taken as a whole, this data points to an overwhelmingly negative political and media construction of Sheik Hilali. This corresponds with other analyses of media representations of the mufti.

My audit of Howard Government documents such as media releases and transcripts of doorstop interviews (Figure 1) found that, as expected, the greatest proportion of references to Sheik Hilali, at 43 per cent, was from Prime Minister Howard.

**Figure 1: Howard Government commentary about Sheik Hilali after the October 2006 sermon at Lakemba mosque**

This audit also found that the second most featured member of the Howard Government was Alexander Downer at 31 per cent. Downer’s comments were generally linked to his role as Foreign Minister and tended to associate Sheik Hilali with a general discourse about newly arrived migrants (especially those coming from predominantly Muslim countries) and their suitability as potential Australians. The third most prominent figure, at 19 per cent, was Treasurer Peter Costello who, unlike Downer, was commenting outside the remit of his portfolio and was probably playing to the Liberal base in case of a challenge to Howard for the leadership. The remainder of the comments were made in releases and doorstop interviews by Howard Government members such as Minister for Immigration, Amanda Vanstone. It should be noted that the issue of press releases by members of the Howard Government did
not correlate with the amount of media coverage given to the individual politicians (see Figure 2). A content analysis of newspaper articles from News Limited’s *The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, The Courier Mail* and *Herald Sun* was undertaken from 26 October 2006 to 16 January 2007.

**Figure 2: Number of articles containing Howard Government comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Articles*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Howard</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Costello</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Downer</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Where an article featured commentary from multiple politicians, these comments were credited individually to each politician.*

**Refers to combined comments made by other members of the Howard Government.**

In all, 165 articles were collated and assessed, with the frequency of media coverage of political comments being tallied. All articles that used the terms “sheik”, “Sheik Hilali” and “mufti” in combination with political commentary were again placed into a data set for analysis. Figure 2 illustrates how media coverage of Peter Costello’s comments dominated those of Alexander Downer, even though the findings in Figure 1 show that Downer referred to Sheik Hilali the greater number of times. The results also showed that out of the 165 articles examined, *The Australian* contained the greater proportion of political commentary. This again could be interpreted as Costello using the national broadsheet for his own potential future political ambitions.
4.4 Political and Media Representations of Sheik Taj El-Din Al-Hilali

My survey of political commentary from 2001 to 2007 found that on a number of occasions the Howard Government was able to foster and use growing fear about a possible internal “Islamic threat” to gain support from the Australian electorate. Due to his perceived vocal support for “extremist” ideas, Sheik Hilali was positioned as part of this “threat”, an example being the inclusion of his name and image during the pamphlet scandal prior to the 2007 federal election (see Appendix C). As a consequence of his controversial statements, Sheik Hilali inadvertently became the perfect media foil and a target for the News Limited newspapers, especially The Australian.

Prior to the publication of his 2006 Ramadan sermon, the majority of the flagged commentary dealing with Sheik Hilali focused on his efforts to secure the release of Australian Douglas Woods, a construction engineer who was held hostage in Iraq from the middle of 2005 before being eventually freed. The commentary of the Howard Government at this time was restrained but receptive of the Grand Mufti’s efforts. In an interview on 15 May 2005 Prime Minister Howard welcomed the involvement of Sheik Hilali in attempts to release Woods, stating, “Everybody’s working hard, including Sheik Hilali, to secure Douglas Wood’s release. I welcome the role of anybody who’s trying to secure this poor man’s release”. However, on 18 May 2005 the Prime Minister used language that was more cautious about Sheik Hilali’s efforts, commenting, “The information I have is that the sheik has spoken to somebody, I mean I don’t want to in any way disagree with it but I just have to enter the cautions of… there’s nothing worse than false expectations in a situation like this”. On 18 June 2005, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was more

complimentary in his choice of language, favourably discussing Sheik Hilali’s involvement following Wood’s release, stating, “Look, he’s made a tremendous effort, Sheik Hilali. Let us not underestimate the role that he’s played”.282

Nevertheless, following the attacks in Bali, Madrid and London, an increasing unease about what was happening in the nation’s mosques entered the discussion about Islam. The “threat” to Australian security posed by imams was investigated by Richard Kerbaj at The Australian, who, on 16 September 2006, reported that young Muslims were being encouraged to turn to terrorism in Australia’s mosques.283 On 4 October 2006 The Australian reprinted in full the text of a speech that John Howard had given at the flagship conservative journal Quadrant’s 50th anniversary dinner the previous evening. Under the headline “John Howard: Standard bearer in liberal culture”, The Australian detailed how, during the speech, Prime Minister Howard railed against those who sought to perpetuate a “perverted interpretations of Islam”.284

4.4.1 Hilali, Howard and the media

Even though the Prime Minister had shown public disdain for those who did not adhere to his notion of Australian identity, it was the media that first drew Sheik Hilali’s sermon to public attention. On 26 October 2006, Richard Kerbaj at The Australian newspaper broke the news story regarding Sheik Hilali’s Ramadan sermon at Lakemba mosque in an article carrying the banner headline “Muslim leader blames women for sex attacks”.285 The piece selectively commented on Sheik Hilali’s sermon, apparently focusing on remarks that were perceived to be the most controversial and the most inflammatory. While the article referred to Prime Minister Howard’s assertion on an earlier occasion that “a minority of migrant men mistreated

their women”, by choosing to highlight the term “Muslim” prominently in the headline, *The Australian*, intentionally or not, followed a pattern already extensively modelled by the Howard Government by creating a direct correspondence between the sheik’s speech and the apparent beliefs of the whole Muslim community. *The Australian* had already run an editorial on 16 September 2006 that defended Prime Minister John Howard’s continued focus on shared values in a culturally diverse country. The editorial attacked separatism among certain Muslims, which was “represented in Australia by extremist clerics”.

The Howard Government also immediately drew attention to how Sheik Hilali’s comments contrasted with the Prime Minister’s concept of “Australian values”. In a doorstop interview and media release of 26 October 2006, the Prime Minister criticised Sheik Hilali’s comments as being “appalling and reprehensible”, and remarked that they were “quite out of touch with contemporary values in Australia”. However, Howard also allotted responsibility for Sheik Hilali’s remarks to the wider Muslim “flock” and the “Islamic faith” in general. Also on 26 October, *The Daily Telegraph* reported Howard’s condemnation of Sheik Hilali’s comments, noting that the Prime Minister had said that comments such as these were “quite out of touch with contemporary values in Australia. I not only reject the comments, I condemn them unconditionally”. In an article in *The Australian* on 27 October 2006 Nick Leys made reference to the Prime Minister’s idea of values again, restating that John Howard was quick to point out the mufti’s comments were “out of touch with contemporary values in Australia”.

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286 ibid.
289 ibid.
While it was Hilali’s comments about women that fuelled the initial controversy – comments that were unquestionably completely at odds with majority public opinion regarding gender equity in Australian society – political and media commentary just as rapidly extended to infer connections with jihadist causes.

Writing in *The Australian* on 26 October 2006, the same day that Kerbaj broke the Lakemba sermon story, journalist Natalie O’Brien used an intelligence report to infer links between Sheik Hilali and extremist groups. O’Brien’s article, which shared the front page with Kerbaj’s, reflected the Coalition’s point of view in that it attacked both the sheik and the Hawke Labor Government. In a front-page article in *The Australian* under the headline “Secret Agent warned on Sheik”, O’Brien reported that local intelligence agencies warned in 1984 that Sheik Hilali could pose a threat to Australia. She criticised the Hawke Labor Government for failing to act decisively on Sheik Hilali when it had the opportunity. O’Brien’s report clearly played into the Australian public’s worst fears about the loyalty of particular sections of the Muslim community by making the unsubstantiated claim that military-style weapons were being kept at Lakemba mosque. Her article concluded by attacking the security credentials of the ALP, claiming that the security agency stated that investigations into the accusations against Sheik Hilali were stymied because “of the importance of the ethnic vote to the Labor Party”.

Within days, commentary from both the Howard Government and print media accused Sheik Hilali of actively supporting overseas terrorist groups including Hezbollah, the Lebanese political party that is on the United States of America’s list of terrorist organisations, and with whom Israel went to war in the northern summer of 2006. The Australian reinforced this image of Sheik Hilali on 30 October 2006 when the newspaper ran an article supporting this supposition and alleging with a bold banner headline that “Sheik Hilali Praises Iraq Jihadists”. It was also clear to whom the Prime Minister was referring in a media interview on 30 October 2006.

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293 ibid.
294 ibid.
295 ibid.
when he stated, “I know Islam is getting a bad name at the moment because of the pronouncements of one individual”. The newspaper coverage in the immediate three week period following the publication of Sheik Hilali’s sermon, especially in *The Australian*, frequently used language that was negative not only in relation to the sheik but to Muslims in general.

The media often drew a direct correlation between “Islam” as an imagined unified whole, and the beliefs of Sheik Hilali, with Bill Leak in *The Australian* on 30 October 2006 reflecting Prime Minister Howard’s comments that “Muslims seem to forget that pluralism works both ways” and that “Islam can modernise and remain relevant”.

This kind of apparently all-too-easy slide into denigration not only of Sheik Hilali but also of Islam more broadly, was widely felt in Australia’s Muslim communities. In an interview at Lakemba mosque in October 2006, Sheik Shady Suleiman spoke of his community’s frustration at not being offered the opportunity for recourse and at being targeted by both a government and a media “which stereotypes”.

Opponents of the Howard Government also argued that the coverage of Sheik Hilali by newspapers such as *The Australian* was merely another case of a “conservative newspaper being in cahoots with a conservative government”.

In a doorstop interview in Bungendore, New South Wales, on 3 November 2006 the Prime Minister again criticised both Sheik Hilali and the wider Muslim community. In that interview when asked about the mufti’s comments Howard stated that he felt worried about the “relationship between Islamic Australians and the rest of the community. I want them fully integrated”.

Between 8 November 2006 and 12 January 2007 a series of articles was published in *The Australian* newspaper that

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298 Leak, p. 18
301 ibid.
reflected negative comments made by Prime Minister Howard. My survey of the articles indicates how closely the newspaper echoed the discourses of the Prime Minister. A sample of headlines includes: “Hilali talk criminal”, 303 “Hilali link in young foe’s drug raid” 304 and “Hilali ridicules nation of convicts”. 305 These articles, by David King, Steve Barrett and Richard Kerbaj respectively, not only criticised Sheik Hilali but also dealt with how his behaviour potentially affected relations between Muslims and the wider Australian community. For example, in the article “Hilali ridicules nation of convicts”, Prime Minister Howard is quoted as saying that the solution to the problem of the controversial mufﬁt was for “Muslims to denounce their leader and remove him from ofﬁce”. 306 Kerbaj simply reproduced the Prime Minister’s generalising assumption that Hilali somehow represented all Muslims as “their leader”.

Muslim community leaders repeatedly attempted to address the critical tone of political and media commentary about the sheik. On the 2 November 2006 they issued a joint media statement saying that they felt that there had been a continuing negativity to coverage of “Muslim” stories, of which the controversy around Sheik Hilali was only one of several instances in which furore about a story was prolonged to a “disproportionate degree, a fact which in turn only fuels this scrutiny”. 307

In another doorstep interview on 14 January 2007 Prime Minister Howard again linked the comments of Sheik Hilali with the wider Muslim community in Australia, stating that the mufﬁt was an embarrassment and that “the Muslim community” had to

306 ibid.
“show a bit of generic leadership” because he was doing untold damage to the “image of Islamic Australians within the broader community”. Prime Minister Howard also bluntly cautioned Australian Muslims that Sheik Hilali was doing them harm, warning, “It’s up to the Islamic community to understand that he is of great embarrassment to them, he’s hurting their reputation in the eyes of their fellow Australians”. In the same week as that doorstep interview, *The Australian’s* religious affairs writer Jill Rowbotham attacked Sheik Hilali in an article entitled “Please don’t let Hilali be seen as misunderstood”. Even though the Prime Minister is not quoted within the story, Rowbotham picks up many of the themes of Howard’s statement. She also critiques those around the sheik, claiming that there are “many things he says in Arabic which the translator tries to hide”.

The idea of Australian “values”, which appeared in the media’s coverage of Prime Minister Howard’s comments following the sermon the previous October, reappeared in political commentary early in 2007. On 23 January 2007 in an article entitled “Answer is Aussies values, says PM”, *The Daily Telegraph* reported that Prime Minister Howard was preparing a speech on “Australian values” in response to Sheik Hilali’s comments that Anglo-Saxon Australians were liars. The newspaper reported that the Prime Minister would argue that people who come to Australia to live must “adopt an Australian identity and not just occupy real estate”. The article reiterated the Prime Minister’s belief in the importance of “shared values and identities”, and that the values debate had been spurred on by comments from “radical Islamic leaders including Sydney’s Sheik Taj al-Din al-Hilali”. In an article on 10

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309 ibid.

310 ibid.


313 ibid.

314 ibid.
April 2007 *The Courier Mail* also reinforced the association between Muslims in general and the sheik, referring to Sheik Hilali on a number of times as the “controversial Muslim cleric”.315

Prime Minister Howard’s views on Sheik Hilali were widely represented in media coverage at the time. Out of a sampling of eleven articles written for *The Australian* by Richard Kerbaj between 28 October 2006 and 18 January 2007 the opinions of Prime Minister Howard were either directly quoted or referred to favourably in five of these, with another two articles referring to other members of the Liberal Party. However, it should be noted that supporters of *The Australian* attempted to defend it against accusations that it was one-sided, arguing that, in the lead-up to the 2001 election, it was “*The Australian* that exposed the children-overboard story as a Howard Government fabrication and, as subsequent events showed, torpedoed the government’s legal case against Indian terror suspect Dr Mohamed Haneef”.316 Prime Minister Howard publicly drew a direct correlation between Sheik Hilali’s statements and the attitudes of many Muslim Australians, saying that if Muslim Australians did not get rid of the sheik from his position as Grand Mufti of Australia, then “unfortunately people will run around saying ‘well the reason they didn’t get rid of him is because secretly some of them support his views’”.317 The dog-whistling implication of such a statement was clearly that many “Muslim Australians share Sheik Hilali’s views”.318 When criticism of Sheik Hilali reached its apex in the period between 2006 and 2007, the Howard Government and the Murdoch print media both began publicly calling for an alternate “moderate” form of Islam to play a more prominent role in Australia’s Muslim community.

4.4.2 Other Government ministers and “Australian values”

Like the Prime Minister and the sampled newspapers, senior coalition ministers such as Treasurer Peter Costello and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer employed generalising techniques, drawing attention to Sheik Hilali’s position as mufti to

315 D. Crawshaw, “Mufti Told to Consider Leaving”, *The Courier Mail*, 10 April 2007, p. 11.
316 Rane et al., 2010, p. 127.
317 Fear, p. 18.
318 ibid.
reinforce the perception that all Australian Muslims were responsible for any utterance made by the sheik. At the same time, they drew a direct link between Hilali, “the Muslim community” and the perception of a threat to Australian values, indeed, even to Australian democracy.

In an interview early on 26 October 2006 Treasurer Peter Costello allotted responsibility for Sheik Hilali’s sermon to all Australian Muslims, stating that the Muslim community needed to “condemn these comments and make it clear to Muslims that this is not the view of Islam and that they will really take some kind of action to disassociate themselves from the comments that Sheik Al-Hilali has made and indeed take some kind of action to try and pull him into line”.319

The same day, in his blog in *The Australian*’s website, journalist Matt Price enthusiastically repeated Costello’s condemnation of Sheik Hilali’s sermon in an article entitled “The Unacceptable Face of Islam”. In this critique, Price used language that was not only pejorative about Sheik Hilali but also made negative reference to the Muslim community in general. In using the terms “radical Islamo-fascist”, “Islamic extremist” and “Islamic terrorist”, Price explicitly positioned both Hilali and the Muslim community as threats that transgressed core principles of the modern Australian state.320 Price concluded his article with a final negative statement: “Islam, we’re constantly told, is a peaceful and tolerant religion, but Hilali’s comments undermine this contention”.321

On 27 October 2006 *The Australian* did attempt to offer a Muslim perspective on the furore in an article by Abdullah Saeed, director of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Islam at the University of Melbourne. Saeed argued that while Prime Minister John Howard and Treasurer Peter Costello were right to “express their

321 ibid.
disgust over the reported comments”, 322 Sheik Hilali’s sermon should not be confused with “Muslim ideals”. 323

However, on 28 October 2006 in the Herald Sun, Andrew Bolt continued Price’s linking of Sheik Hilali’s sermon with the views of the wider Muslim community, writing, “We have a problem, and I’m afraid to say it’s not just Hilali”. 324 In the same article, Bolt also praised The Australian newspaper’s Richard Kerbaj for his “courage and enterprise” in “exposing the extremists in the mosques”. 325

In The Australian on 28 October 2006 Bill Leak wrote an article openly critical of both the sheik and the Muslim community, with the article making statements such as “Sheik’s values out of step with modernity” and “Australia’s tolerant society won’t tolerate intolerance”. 326 Leak made further comments about Islam which only perpetuated stereotyped representations of a “monolithic religion”. 327 At the end of the month, Peter Costello was still discussing the sheik’s comments in interviews and again linked the wider community with Sheik Hilali’s sermon. Costello remarked on the 31 October 2006 that while there may have been 500 people at the sermon, “there were 5,000 later on that came down to support the sheik after the comments became public”. 328 Costello’s remarks positioned the sheik within a dialogue about extremism by arguing that “this strain of extremist thinking, what is often called Islamist thinking, is coming through in Sheik Hilali”. 329 Costello concluded by stating that

323 ibid.
325 ibid.
326 ibid.
329 ibid.
extremism was what potentially “happens in a lot of these mosques, particularly in Sheik Hilali’s”.  

In *The Australian* on 1 November 2006 Janet Albrechtsen attacked the sheik for his comments, linking them to the views of the wider Islamic community with the completely unsupported claim that “Many Muslims support his outpourings of hate”. In the same article, Albrechtsen quoted Peter Costello’s remarks that "these kinds of attitudes have actually influenced people ... So you wonder whether a kid like [gang rapist] Bilal Skaf had grown up hearing these kinds of attitudes and you wonder whether kids rioting down at Cronulla have heard these kinds of attitudes".

In January, Costello once again publicly attacked the mufti following Sheik Hilali’s interview on Egyptian television in which he called non-Muslim Australians liars and said Muslims had a greater right to be in Australia than descendants of convicts.

Costello’s call that any individual who “doesn’t support what this country stands for, does not want to be a part of this country…, should leave” was reported positively by Andrew Bolt in his *The Daily Telegraph* blog on 21 February 2007. Bolt quoted Costello’s remark that individuals such as Muslim clerics should be deported from Australia “if they are prepared to support terrorism”. The language used in Bolt’s piece was confrontational, directly linking extremist acts such as terrorism with the Grand Mufti of Australia, and thereby with Australia’s Muslim community. While Bolt agreed with Costello’s sentiment, he stated that if Costello’s idea is not merely to

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330 ibid.
332 ibid.
335 ibid.
336 ibid.
be political indulgence he needed to offer concrete evidence of how he proposed the process of stripping citizenship to work.\textsuperscript{337}

In a speech given in Sydney on 26 February 2006 with the title, “Worth Promoting, Worth Defending – Australian Citizenship: What It Means and How to Nurture It”, Costello laid out what he believed to be the best framework within which to “protect rights and liberty in this country”.\textsuperscript{338} He concluded his speech by arguing that the “refusal to acknowledge the rule of law as laid down by democratic institutions also stabs at the heart of the Australian compact”.\textsuperscript{339} In this speech, Costello also cited Sheik Hilali’s comment that “there are two laws, there is an Australian law and there is an Islamic law”.\textsuperscript{340} Costello stated the need for open dissent within the Muslim community: “I hope moderate Muslim leaders will speak out and condemn these comments, take some kind of action to disassociate themselves from the comments which Sheik Hilali has made”.\textsuperscript{341} Costello drew a direct correlation between the comments made during the Lakemba sermon and the gang rape cases which had occurred at the beginning of the decade, stating that if you have a “significant religious leader preaching to a flock in a situation where we have had gang rapes, in a way that makes them seem justifiable, then people that listen to that type of comment can get the wrong idea”.\textsuperscript{342}

In “Security Politics and Us”, Anthony Burke analysed the rhetorical strategies employed in Costello’s speech, finding that the language was uncompromisingly critical, with its central message being that “Muslim values are a threat to us…if they are not stamped out we may die”.\textsuperscript{343} Burke detailed how, through “its insidious

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{337} ibid.
\bibitem{339} ibid.
\bibitem{340} ibid.
\bibitem{341} ibid.
\bibitem{342} ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
the juxtaposition of terrorism and Islamic religious law”, the speech constructed Muslims “as a potential ‘fifth-column’” within Australian society”. In his analysis of Costello’s remarks Burke identified that what was seen to be at stake in the issue of “Muslim values” was the very survival of the Australian state. He noted, however, that the relation between the two was unclear, “After all, what do values have to do with security? Political leadership speaks as if the answers are self-evident”.

After Howard and Costello the government figure who featured most frequently in newspaper coverage regarding Hilali was the Foreign Minister, South Australian MP Alexander Downer. In an interview given in Adelaide on 10 April 2007 Downer expressed his disappointment with Sheik Hilali and, similarly to comments made by other senior figures in the Howard Government, linked the mufti to the wider Muslim community in Australia. In the interview, Downer is reported to have said that in his view what Sheik Hilali “is doing is damaging within Australia and internationally the reputation of Australian Muslims ... He’s creating the impression amongst non-Muslims that Muslims are extremists and extravagant with their language”. Downer concluded by saying that Sheik Hilali was a “very bad and unrepresentative leader of Muslims in Australia”. In an article by Greg Sheridan entitled “Heat mounts on Hilali over comments”, The Australian newspaper supported Downer’s comments, restating Downer’s accusations that Sheik Hilali had helped pass money “raised by members of the Muslim community in Australia to supporters of al-Qa’eda and Hezbollah’s terrorist arm”. In the article, Sheridan quoted Downer as placing responsibility for the sheik with the Muslim community, by stating “the sooner the Islamic community in Australia dealt with him the better”. Even though the news story was about the sheik’s comments, the article strongly linked Sheik Hilali with the

344 ibid.
345 ibid.
347 ibid.
349 ibid.
Muslim community, referring to “Muslims” 16 times and “Islam/Islamic” 15 times. In The Australian article, Sheridan did not offer any contrasting viewpoint to Downer’s comments, with the article’s tone being pejorative towards Sheik Hilali and towards Muslims. On the same date, in an article titled “Mufti told to consider leaving”, The Courier Mail also reported Downer’s comments as featured in The Australian in which he had remarked that the Islamic community had to deal with the mufti because “Sheik Hilali had become a completely discredited figure”.350

Richard Kerbaj’s enthusiastic coverage of any criticism of Sheik Hilali continued into 2007. Downer’s language grew even stronger. In The Australian on 10 April 2007 Kerbaj reported Downer’s demand that the mufti “step down and consider leaving the country”.351 In support of this, Kerbaj quoted senior Muslim leader Ameer Ali, who was also critical of the mufti, stating “Sheik Hilali is becoming an ‘ongoing problem’ for the community and would best serve his people by leaving his spiritual post as mufti”.352 Kerbaj noted Downer’s assertion that it was the responsibility of the “Islamic community” to deal with Sheik Hilali who was “damaging the standing of the Muslim community in Australia and beyond”. He also repeated Downer’s claim that the mufti “supported their backing of terrorist attacks by organisations such as Hezbollah in the Middle East”.353

In an interview on 26 July 2007 Foreign Minister Downer once again commented on how Sheik Hilali impacted negatively on Muslim Australians, stating that people like him:

…do enormous damage to Muslims in Australia. They do enormous damage. They are just such extremists and such eccentrics and describing women as meat and all that sort of thing. It is just completely unacceptable to the great mainstream of Australian

350 Crawshaw.
352 ibid.
353 ibid.

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Further, Downer raised the issue of Shari’a law in conjunction with Sheik Hilali, stating that Islamic law is followed by people who wish to turn Australia into an “Islamic fundamentalist society” and that “they believe that is a long term objective”.  

Early in the controversy others within the federal government were emboldened by Howard and Costello’s comments and were quick to follow with public statements. The Liberal MP Sophie Mirabella suggested on 26 October 2006 that Sheik Hilali should be deported back to the Middle East, saying, “I have a message for Sheik Hilali: This is Australia, not Iran, and violence and degradation of women is not accepted”. The Murdoch press supported Mirabella’s views. For example, in a 27 October 2006 article in *The Daily Telegraph*, under the headline “Vile Sheik must go”, Malcolm Farr reported Mirabella’s criticism not only of the mufti but of the Muslim community, including her claim that Sheik Hilali’s comments showed that there was “a huge disconnect between the rights of women and the laws of Islam”.  

In a media release, issued also on 26 October 2006 Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Amanda Vanstone was outspoken in her condemnation of the mufti, stating bluntly, “I would encourage any Australians outraged by Sheik Hilali’s comments to make their views known to him or to the Lakemba mosque”. While Vanstone included reference to Sheik Hilali three times in the release, she referred to the Muslim community seven times, including in direct reference to Sheik Hilali (“senior Muslim cleric Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali”). In another media release, issued

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355 ibid.

356 “Aussie Cleric Defends Rape: May Be Deported”.


359 ibid.
on 9 November 2006 Amanda Vanstone used the sheik’s remarks to attack the immigration policy of the previous Labor Government. Nevertheless, the Murdoch print media criticised the “moderate” reaction of both the minister and her department in responding to Sheik Hilali’s comments. An opinion piece by the former head of the Treasury, John Stone, published in *The Australian* on 17 November 2006, attacked both the Howard Government as a whole and Amanda Vanstone in particular for their failure to act on “the most serious threat to our future, namely the fundamental incompatibility of Islam with Western society”. Stone’s article was strongly worded and was highly critical of Vanstone’s department, stating, “The only semblance of government action on our Muslim problem has been the discussion paper on a possible formal test for citizenship issued in September”. Even though the article was ostensibly primarily concerned with Sheik Hilali, its overall tone was clearly focused on Australia’s “Muslim problem”.

Amanda Vanstone again attacked the mufti following his comments on Egyptian television. On 11 January 2007 *The Daily Telegraph* reported Vanstone’s remarks, “if Sheik Taj al-Din al-Hilali didn’t like Australia or its heritage, he did not have to return from overseas”. While the article did offer a Muslim reaction, including those of Kuranda Seyit, executive director of the Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations (FAIR) and president of the Muslim Women’s National Network of Australia, Aziza Abdel Halim, these were supportive of Vanstone’s comments and critical of Sheik Hilali.

The Howard Government had demonstrably put the “Muslim community” on notice before Hilali’s sermon. On 17 September 2006 the *Herald Sun* featured a news article

362 Ibid.
363 Ibid.
by Lincoln Wright reporting on a speech made by the government’s multicultural spokesperson, Andrew Robb, to an audience of 100 imams. Under the headline “Muslims read riot act”, the article detailed how it was fundamentally necessary that “Muslims took responsibility for their destiny”.\(^{365}\) The article explained how Robb had told the audience that it was “[their] faith that is being invoked as justification for these evil [terrorist] acts”\(^{366}\). Robb’s statement contained critical elements that were clearly directed not just at acts of terrorism, but at a “victim mentality that branded any criticism as discrimination”.\(^{367}\)

In addition to the material already quoted above, a sampling of coverage in *The Australian* on 28 and 29 October 2006 showed that space was given not only to stories pertaining directly to Sheik Hilali and the fall-out from his sermon, but also to other articles which extensively examined the Muslim community in Australia. These articles at times questioned the compatibility of Islam and mainstream Australian society. The reporting in these two editions, which jointly covered 10 newspaper pages, featured political discussion that corresponded with the critical editorial line adopted by *The Australian*. In these two editions, articles dealing with the sheik’s sermon prominently featured comments made by Prime Minister Howard and the Multicultural Affairs Secretary Andrew Robb. The general consensus among both the media and political discourse examined in this study was that Sheik Hilali “had not integrated into Australian society”.\(^{368}\)

In an address to the House of Representatives in May 2007 the then Attorney General, Philip Ruddock, also proposed a connection between Sheik Hilali and overseas terrorist organisations. Hansard of 21 May 2007 records statements made by Ruddock regarding Sheik Hilali’s possible link to the Lebanese group Hezbollah.\(^{369}\) On 22 May


\(^{366}\) ibid.

\(^{367}\) ibid.


2007 in an article in *The Australian* entitled “AFP [Australian Federal Police] blasted for taking Sheik Hilali at his word”, Richard Kerbaj reported critical comments made by federal Opposition Chief Whip Michael Danby. In the article, Danby is quoted as remarking that in failing to reopen the investigation into alleged links between Sheik Hilali and overseas terrorist groups Ruddock and the AFP were “sending a ‘permissive message’ to Australia’s extremist Muslim minority”.  

On 11 June 2007 in a front page banner headline that trumpeted “Firebrand Muslim Cleric steps down”, the *Herald Sun* again established a direct correlation between Sheik Hilali’s views and those of average Muslim Australians. As a public figure, Sheik Hilali had been attacked for allegedly making entreaties to overseas extremist elements and for being complicit in providing aid to these organisations. In the *Herald Sun*, Sam Edmunds went well beyond the immediate story of the resignation of Sheik Hilali from the position of Grand Mufti of Australia to examine other apparent actions, both proven and alleged. Edmunds reported that “Sheik Hilali also was scorned for praising jihadists for fighting against coalition forces and has been accused of mishandling charity money raised after last year’s Israel-Hezbollah war.”

The language used by the Howard Government when discussing Sheik Hilali was obviously problematic in that it not only was highly critical of the mufti, but also prominently featured the wider Muslim community in this commentary, implying direct associations. Many of these comments were intended for media consumption, taking the form of interviews or media releases. The effect of this method of disseminating information was that frequently no opportunity was given for the expression of any contrasting viewpoints, thereby ensuring that these political statements were highly likely to influence representations of Muslims in Australia and thus to have a negative influence on public opinion and attitudes towards Muslims.

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372 ibid.
4.5 Conclusion

Edward Said observed that in western discourse what made “them” different to “us” was that “they” mainly understood force or violence best. In the period after his sermon at Lakemba mosque Sheik Hilali was repeatedly positioned as an “extremist” and a “threat” for whom violent action was part of his ideology. Further, because of his position, the same beliefs were associated with social and cultural understanding of Muslims in Australia.

My analysis of Murdoch newspaper coverage of political commentary revealed that there was a frequently repeated correlation implied between Sheik Hilali’s comments and the wider Muslim community in Australia. *The Australian’s* printing of the English translation of Sheik Hilali’s sermon was the catalyst for this reporting. Coverage in *The Australian* was significant because, having broken the story, the newspaper effectively claimed ownership of it. However, the great majority of government and Murdoch press commentary was negative, not only towards the sheik but also by inference towards the wider Muslim community.

In examining commentary following Sheik Hilali’s 2006 sermon at Lakemba mosque and his remarks on Egyptian television at the beginning of 2007, it was clear that Murdoch press coverage of related political discourse focused on negative representations of Muslims. There was no evidence to suggest that the tone of coverage in the selected newspapers would have been any different if the politicians examined had not made any statements, or had made less negative statements. Indeed, in the case of the mufti’s sermon, given that it was first reported by Richard Kerbaj in *The Australian*, discussion and criticism of Sheik Hilali was in fact originally driven by the media.

The majority of statements made by politicians occurred in the context of either doorstop or scheduled media interviews. The overriding rationale for political statements made by Howard Government figures was that Sheik Hilali’s beliefs could not be integrated within the “values” of mainstream Australian society. The remarks

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made by senior federal government members, especially Treasurer Peter Costello, were often made outside the responsibility of their portfolios, suggesting that politicians recognised the opportunities for political capital that such comments offered. It needs to be remembered, however, that the climate of public opinion that produced such opportunities had itself been fostered by the comments and actions of various senior government figures, especially Howard himself, prior to the controversy about the Lakemba sermon. The Murdoch press and federal government politicians were equally responsible for preparing the ground into which the Hilali controversy exploded on 26 October 2006.

A content analysis of 250 articles in three News Limited newspapers from 26 October 2006 to 16 January 2007 found that the dominant terms used to describe Sheik Hilali were “fanatic”, “intolerant”, “militant”, “fundamentalist”, “misogynist” and “alien” (See Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Evaluative variation in negative tenor of newspaper coverage when discussing Islam and Muslims in relation to Sheik Hilali*

![Key Descriptive Terms](image)


Figure 3 reveals that there was a minor variation in the evaluative tenor across the surveyed newspapers but that their discursive patterns are nevertheless quite similar.
The most frequently used terms across all the surveyed newspapers were “intolerant”, “misogynistic” and “alien” while “fanatic” was used the least amount of times across all newspapers. It should also be noted that the use of the term “Muslim” was found to be more common in *The Australian* and *Herald Sun’s* coverage though its use was found to be mostly appropriate, and the coverage in *The Australian* was found to be consistent.

Such media coverage, when viewed in conjunction with the Howard Government’s anti-terrorist legislation, clearly contributed to perpetuating the public fear that there was an extremist element operating within Australia, an element that was sustained with theocratic visions of a new global Islamist caliphate. As part of this “shock-value” style of journalism, news articles about sheik Hilali and his comments comparing scantily dressed women with “uncovered meat” featured prominently in the media’s scrutiny of Muslims in Australia during the final years of the Howard Government. This increased scrutiny was rewarding for some reporters covering these stories: the 2007 Walkley Award, considered to be the highest recognition of journalistic excellence in Australia, went to Richard Kerbaj for his reporting on Sheik Hilali, which by association, had negatively characterised all of Australia’s Muslim communities.

Out of the News Limited newspapers surveyed as part of this analysis, the nationally circulated *The Australian* offered the widest commentary, as could be expected given the state-based circulation and focus of the other sampled newspapers. In its coverage, *The Australian* not only reported on Sheik Hilali and Lakemba mosque, but also contained news stories about visiting imams who were seen to have evinced support for the sheik by their mere association. Out of all of the sampled newspapers (*The Australian, Herald Sun, The Daily Telegraph, The Courier Mail*) it was *The Australian*, and particularly the stories by Richard Kerbaj, that carried the most frequently strident coverage and attacks on the then Grand Mufti of Australia.

374 Rane et al., 2010, p. 51.
375 ibid.
An examination of the collated data dealing with Sheik Hilali found that the majority of coverage in the print media during the specified period was pejorative, positioning Sheik Hilali as a “bad Muslim”, and someone who did not fit in with the set notions of Australian “values”. It is evident from my analysis that one of the reasons Sheik Hilali proved to be such a vexing figure was that his views were seemingly contradictory. At one moment the mufti apparently supported the attacks of 9/11 whilst later condemning the Bali bombings, saying that the attack in 2002 was “against all Australians and is un-Australian”. The impact of these contradictory remarks was further complicated by the failure of the surveyed media and the government to understand the often fraught social and political dynamics of internecine tensions in the Muslim community in and around Lakemba.

This chapter identified two main effects at work in the media coverage surveyed. Firstly, that Sheik Hilali was stereotyped as a “bad” Muslim, thereby perpetuating the Orientalist stereotype identified by Edward Said. Secondly, that the personal views of Sheik Hilali, as reflected in his sermon, were attributed to the overall Muslim community, the implication being that ordinary Muslims endorsed these views. This resulted in increasingly strident calls from government figures for Muslims to publicly denounce the Grand Mufti.

In general the Murdoch press coverage ignored the sheik’s considerable community service, his strong reputation as a scholar and his long record of assistance to women and women’s organisations. As Shakira Hussein observed, in the aftermath of 2001 media reporting of political commentary actively influenced representations of Muslims. Due to News Limited coverage of Howard Government commentary about Sheik Hilali, these negative discussions affected not only those Muslims who reside in western Sydney but also Muslims throughout Australia.

377 Akbarzadeh, 2010, p. 16.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE DETENTION OF DOCTOR MOHAMED HANEEF

This chapter is concerned with the arrest and detention in Australia of Indian surgeon Dr Mohamed Haneef in 2007. Following the July 2007 terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom, Dr Haneef found himself embroiled in an atmosphere of alarm regarding the use of overseas trained doctors in Australia and the potential threat of terrorist attack. Dr Haneef was made a terror suspect by association with relatives of the same name who were involved in the Glasgow bombing and because he didn’t have a return ticket to Australia. I examine the legal case against Dr Haneef; the Howard Government’s handling of the situation; and media coverage of Howard Government discourse about Muslims. The Howard Government’s handling of the detention of Dr Haneef, and the way in which the News Limited newspapers covered the government’s actions, are significant because they show that newspaper reporting of the government’s narrative was not consistent. The implications of this inconsistency were that Dr Haneef was initially viewed as a terrorist rather than an individual whose rights were not being respected, but was later seen as falsely accused and having been treated in an unjustifiably severe manner.

The next section contains a brief overview of the Howard Government’s 2005 anti-terror laws and the impact of these laws on the case of Dr Haneef.

5.1 Australian Anti-Terror Laws Post 2001

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Bali in 2002 and 2005 the Howard Government introduced a specific package of anti-terrorist legislation, the 2005 Anti-Terrorism Act (No.2). This legislation would be used in the arrest and detention of Dr Haneef. Attorney General Phillip Ruddock, who had helped design the anti-terrorist legislation and would play a leading role in the Dr Haneef case, justified the need for such legislation by citing the threat from terrorist attacks such as those of 9/11, Madrid,

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379 Pennell et al., p. 14.
London and Bali.\textsuperscript{380} The attacks listed by Ruddock further reinforced the negative association between terrorist activities and Islam, establishing an environment in which the accusations made against Dr Haneef could initially seem plausible. Airing a view that was representative of criticism among political commentators, William Maley of the Australian National University (ANU) warned against the Howard Government’s discourses of cultural and religious exclusion, highlighting the risks of using “liberal values to create a model of political life that is far from being liberal”.\textsuperscript{381} Later, Maley believed that there was a political agenda behind the arrest of the doctor, noting that the Howard Government was prepared to cast doubts on Dr Haneef’s innocence and “that some in the Liberal Party networks were willing to use the fear of the other for political purposes”.\textsuperscript{382}

In 2005, David Wright-Neville, a specialist in international relations and terrorism who was then at Monash University, publicly warned that the new anti-terrorism measures were being introduced in haste without any real consideration regarding their potentially negative repercussions. Wright-Neville suggested that the new laws had the prospect of being counterproductive and could prove to be highly divisive.\textsuperscript{383} He also queried whether the Howard government was exaggerating the domestic threat “for political ends”.\textsuperscript{384} The media became a key means that the government attempted to deploy in conveying their message about the threat from terrorism to the public. American scholar of journalism and history, Michael Schudson, identified three occasions on which journalistic neutrality can be suspended: tragedy, danger and a threat to national security.\textsuperscript{385} The climate in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 meant these three occasions existed, as they did to a lesser extent after the bombings in Bali in 2002 and 2005. Significantly, the government’s case against Dr Haneef was placed within the category of a threat to national security.

\textsuperscript{380} ibid, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{381} Maley in Yasmeen, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{382} ibid.
\textsuperscript{383} Aulich and Wettenhall (eds), p. 247.
\textsuperscript{384} ibid.
\textsuperscript{385} K. Foster, What Are We Doing in Afghanistan: The Military and the Media at War, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2009, p. 121.
5.1.1 The Discourse on Terrorism in Australia

In Edward Said’s analysis, western discourses position Islam as the religion of resistance “whose mission is war against Christianity and Judaism as exterior enemies”.386 Richard Pennell notes, in *Banning Islamic Books in Australia*, that media coverage of acts of terrorism often involves the repetition of certain questionable clichés about Islam.387 For instance, when reporting on suicide bombings there is often a description of the “seventy-two virgins” myth and how “suicide bombers seek death buoyed by the promise of an eternity of erotic pleasure”.388

In Australian media reporting on terrorist attacks in the wake of the advent of the “war on terror”, the threat posed by terrorist action was often denoted as “radical Islam and, by inference, Australian Muslims”.389 Anne Aly’s research examined the overall perceptions and attitudes of Muslim community members to the general media discourse on terrorism in the period between 2001 and 2005. Aly found that by attempting to respond to the discussion on terrorism and the implicit linking of terrorism with Islam, Australian Muslims were effectively forced to reconstruct their identity in ways which reinforced religion as the primary marker of identity.390 Aly observed, however, that in doing so, such responses only served to “effectively corroborate the discursive construction in the popular media where religion is the sole characteristic by which Muslims are recognised”.391

The potential danger posed by the 2005 anti-terror legislation divided the Coalition, and not all members of the Howard Government agreed with the new measures. Prominent Liberal Petro Georgiou urged the government to consider setting up an independent watchdog to monitor the impact of sweeping anti-terrorism legislation,

387 Pennell et al., p. 21.
388 ibid.
391 ibid.
arguing that multiculturalism was “an ally, not an enemy, in the fight against terrorism”.\textsuperscript{392} Georgiou also observed that since 2001 Muslims had become increasingly vulnerable to suspicion, victimisation and prejudice and that their loyalty to Australia had been publicly questioned.\textsuperscript{393} Queensland Liberal, Senator George Brandis, was not as critical of the new legislation as Georgiou, supporting expanded powers in the fight against terrorism. However, like Georgiou, Brandis recognised that it was important to “correspondingly expand” the safeguards against abuse of powers and protect the rights of all members of the community.\textsuperscript{394}

Prior to 9/11, the Australian public was already exposed to a media discussion that positioned Muslims in Australia as the “other”, most notably in response to the coverage on ethnic crime and the issue of asylum seekers. However, external terrorist actions on and after September 11 2001 increased the process of “othering” in the media. This involved intensification of the sequence of associations that invariably utilised a psychological understanding of “normality” and “deviance”.\textsuperscript{395}

Aly observes that in Australia, the political response of the Howard Government to the “war on terror” “inculcated an atmosphere of terror where Australian Muslims are identified as the objects of this fear”.\textsuperscript{396} Brian Massumi describes how, post 9/11 in national and international settings, the fear of terrorism was frequently modulated through “government and the general media to perpetuate a state of anxiety that finds expression in the heightened levels of concern and suspicion over a perceived threat”.\textsuperscript{397}

Comments made at this time by Australian federal politicians such as Treasurer Peter Costello contributed to a misconception that it was not possible to be a “good Muslim” whilst simultaneously being a “good Australian”. This line of thinking makes an uncompromising differentiation, one that essentially imagines that for

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{393} ibid.
\bibitem{394} ibid.
\bibitem{395} Aly, p. 207.
\bibitem{396} ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Muslims “where Australian culture conflicts with Islamic practice, Islam comes first”. After the bombings in London in 2005, Peter Costello suggested that these attacks posed a clear danger to Australia’s freedom, and that if “this could happen in Britain, it could happen in Australia…some of our fellow citizens, apparently well-adjusted to Australian life, could be radicalised and turned to terrorism”. However, Costello argued, these freedoms could only be respected within a certain “framework”, and there were some people who were prepared, whether in the name of religion or politics, to “take away the rights and freedoms of others, even to murder them”. This kind of comment coming from members of the Howard Government was actively reported in News Limited newspapers.

5.1.2 Media reaction to anti-terror legislation

The reporting of Dr Haneef’s detention, and the change in media discourses from coverage of a terrorist’s arrest to a focus on Haneef’s human rights, was an important element in the collapse of the government’s case. A significant issue for the media is the role and influence of its coverage of terrorism, in particular the question of whether this coverage “vilifies” or creates “empathy”. Journalism has conventionally attempted to get at the social meaning of any significant news event, yet in reporting terrorism there are questions raised about how far news coverage can meet journalistic standards of “balance, truth and objectivity in cases of extreme political conflict”. If the media rely too much on the framework of interpretation offered by government and public officials, the news runs the risk of reinforcing the viewpoint of “political leaders and the security policies that they implement”. Political science professor Abraham Miller notes that the way in which the media chooses to depict acts of terrorism can influence the way in which we engage in discourse about terrorism, observing that “terrorism and the media are entwined in an

400 ibid.
401 Norris et al., p. 3.
402 ibid.
403 ibid.
almost inexorable, symbiotic relationship...terrorism is capable of writing any drama to compel the media’s attention”.  

In October 2001, *The Daily Telegraph* published an article with the headline “Terror Australis: Bin Laden groups in our suburbs”. The article detailed how, in raids by the AFP and ASIO on homes in western Sydney, agents had found more than a dozen men from Middle Eastern countries including Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia who were identified as having connections to or being actual members of radical Islamist groups. *The Daily Telegraph’s* editorial that day unambiguously bore the title “Entry is a privilege not a right”, a sentiment that mirrored comments made by the Howard Government regarding asylum seekers.

In their analysis of *The Australian* newspaper’s coverage of the “war on terror”, Martin Hirst and Robert Schutze focus on the “invocation of national discourses”. They examine how the threat posed by global terrorism, when combined with recurrent anxieties about border security, was used to garner political, media and public support for Australia’s commitment to the “war on terror” and its military involvement in both Iraq and Afghanistan. They cite *The Australian’s* foreign editor Greg Sheriden’s reporting as an example of a direct discursive correlation between the Bali bombings and the threat apparently posed by the “other”. Sheriden’s negative comments included the statement “just as we love Australia, the evil men who murdered our people in Bali...they surely hate us. They hate us not for our wickedness; they hate us for our goodness”. Although Sheridan did not make it explicit in his reporting, it was clear that “they” was a dog-whistling usage to suggest Muslim extremists.

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406 ibid.
407 ibid.
409 ibid.
The Howard Government’s theme of national security continued to be supported by newspaper columnists, especially those of high profile conservative commentators such as Miranda Devine, Piers Akerman, Andrew Bolt and Janet Albrechtsen.\textsuperscript{411} At the end of 2005, Janet Albrechtsen was still trumpeting the security triumphs of the Howard Government in the pages of \textit{The Australian} newspaper, stating that to “criticise Howard as a conservative ideologue gravely underestimates him”.\textsuperscript{412}

The underground and double-decker bus suicide bombings in London in July 2005 had a flow on effect in Australia. Within hours of the news of the bombing breaking, Howard had told the ABC “Australians will feel very deeply about this”.\textsuperscript{413} Writing in the \textit{Herald Sun}, Andrew Bolt went much further, stating “it’s time we accept a difficult truth: many of the Muslims we invite to live in Australia want to destroy us”.\textsuperscript{414} Bolt’s collective use of “many” and “Muslims” was significant, insinuating that “the Muslims who lived in the Australian community were not really part of the majority, they were not one of ‘us’”, and that “Islam was in some way alien to Australian culture and threatened it not simply in the immediate terms of terrorism but also in terms of values”.\textsuperscript{415} On 23 August 2005, Howard held a “summit” with selected Australian Muslims, the outcome of which was a “Statement of Principles”. This document stated that it is an “overriding loyalty to Australia, and a commitment to its traditions, values and institutions which is the common bond that unites us all”.\textsuperscript{416} It further stated that “all Australians unconditionally reject all forms of violence or terrorism”.\textsuperscript{417}

Despite this, the Howard Government continued to make public pronouncements associating Muslims with terror. I have referred earlier to a September 2006 article by Lincoln Wright in the \textit{Herald Sun}, with the headline “Muslims read riot act”. This article provides clear evidence of an attempt by the Howard Government to rationalise

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\textsuperscript{412} N. Lucy & S. Mickler, \textit{The War on Democracy: Conservative Opinion in the Australian Press}, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2006, p. 75.  \\
\textsuperscript{413} Pennell et al., p. 23.  \\
\textsuperscript{414} ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{415} ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{416} Yasmeen, p. 270.  \\
\textsuperscript{417} ibid, p. 271.  
\end{flushright}
their negative discourses about Muslims by allocating group responsibility for terrorist acts to the whole Muslim community in Australia, and also evidence of the News Limited press adopting and supporting government discourse. Wright detailed the government’s criticism of the Muslim community’s perceived failure in condemning the actions of terrorists, a view underlined in a speech made by the parliamentary secretary for immigration and multicultural affairs. The Wright article reports that, invited to speak at a conference in Sydney, the Howard Government’s multicultural spokesman, Andrew Robb, told an audience of one hundred imams that, “these were tough times requiring great personal resolve”. As Costello had done previously, Robb reiterated what had become by now the government line, bluntly informing the audience that “we live in a world of terrorism where evil acts are being regularly perpetrated in the name of your faith, and because it is your faith that is being invoked as justification for these evil acts, it is your problem”.418 To ensure that the worst-case scenario did not become a reality, Muslims would need to “speak up and condemn terrorism, defend your role in the way of life that we all share here in Australia.”419 The Herald Sun also reported Robb’s statement that he supported Howard’s tough new stance on immigration and testing for new migrants, as well as his argument that the policy wasn’t discriminatory and that it was “important for migrants to learn English”.420 In reporting the event in terms of Australia’s Muslim leaders being “read the riot act” – that is, being publicly chastised – about the need to denounce any links between Islam and terrorism,421 the Herald Sun overtly supported and furthered the government’s cause, not the least by offering no expressions of discomfort about an eminent gathering of community leaders being addressed in such a manner, indeed being ambushed at their own conference.

Following 9/11, Prime Minister Howard had warned that mosques and Muslim schools would be monitored to ensure that no “virtues of terrorism” were being

419 ibid.
420 ibid.
421 L. Wright.
preached within the Muslim community.\(^{422}\) Clearly it was with some justification that the *Anti-Terrorism Act (No.2)* of 2005 was perceived by Australia’s Muslim communities as being primarily targeted at them and their organisations. Prior to 2001, it was felt that the need for such legislation, despite events such as the Sydney Hilton bombing during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting in 1978, did not exist because Australia was essentially free of “acts of political violence”.\(^{423}\) Before 2005 there were no national laws that addressed terrorism – when the issue was discussed it was felt that the criminal law would suffice to deal with terrorism and other forms of political violence.\(^{424}\) By 2006, when Robb made his speech and Wright’s article appeared, the *Anti-Terrorism Act (No.2) 2005* had been passed and it was quite clear to people in Australia’s Muslim communities that they were not perceived in the same way as other citizens were perceived – by their government, by the press or, apparently, by a significant proportion of their fellow Australians.

John Howard had placed the issue of national security at the centre of his claim to leadership of the nation.\(^{425}\) For the Howard Government, the attacks of 2001 were the catalyst for a succession of anti-terror laws whose introduction allowed the Coalition to question the security credentials of the federal Opposition at every given opportunity.\(^{426}\) The introduction of the security laws in 2005 meant that anyone suspected of having any knowledge of terrorism could be detained and questioned for a week on the order of a judge.\(^{427}\) Introduced as part of the changes to the anti-terror legislation in 2005, and one of its most controversial elements, was the control order that allowed the detention of a suspect to prevent them from taking part in an act of terrorism.\(^{428}\) Under Howard, the Coalition sought to make security its defining feature, taking the country to war to defend against terrorism, keeping “illegal” boat

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424 ibid.
426 Errington & Van Onselen, p. 335.
427 ibid.
428 ibid.
arrivals detained off-shore in its “Pacific solution”, and “softening the rule of law to observe and apprehend persons suspected of subversive activities”.\(^{429}\) It was the latter aspect of the legislation that would characterise the turn of events involving Haneef, which began a world away.

### 5.2 The attempted attacks in London and Glasgow

The arrest and detention of Dr Haneef under the Howard Government’s anti-terror laws was based on his alleged involvement in an attempted terror attack on the other side of the world. These terror attacks, and the threat posed by Muslims such as Dr Haneef, were used to justify the government’s hard-line anti-terror stance. On 30 June, in the northern summer holiday period, a Jeep Cherokee was driven through the glass doors of the main terminal at Glasgow International Airport. The occupants of the vehicle then attempted unsuccessfully to set alight to propane canisters in the back of the Jeep.\(^{430}\) The Jeep, containing gas cylinders and cans of petrol, was driven by Kafeel Ahmed with the clear intention of killing or seriously injuring holidaymakers crowded into the terminal.\(^{431}\) On the day before the Glasgow attempt, 29 June 2007, there was another failed attempt involving two car bombs that were discovered in the Haymarket area of London – one outside the Tiger Tiger nightclub and the other in Cockspur Street. Both bombs were disabled before they could be detonated.\(^{432}\) A link between the attacks in London and Glasgow was quickly established.

It soon became clear that the Glasgow attack was largely organised and carried out by skilled medical practitioners living in Britain. Authorities were shocked to find that out of the eight people who were arrested in the period immediately following the attempted attacks, five were doctors.\(^{433}\) However, one suspect arrested in relation to

\(^{429}\) Weiss, p. 1.


\(^{431}\) Marr, p. 85.


the plot was actually residing and working in another hemisphere at the time of the incident and, as would later be proven, had a tenuous link, at best, to the attackers.\textsuperscript{434} That suspect, Mohamed Haneef, was also a Muslim doctor and was originally from India, but working at the Gold Coast Hospital in Australia at the time of the attempted attacks in Britain.

The arrest and detention of Dr Haneef at Brisbane International Airport while he was waiting to board a flight, first to Singapore and then to India, occurred on 2 July 2007.\textsuperscript{435} Dr Haneef was arrested primarily because his SIM card had been found in the possession of his cousin Sabeel Ahmed, Kafeel Ahmed’s brother, who had been detained in Britain in connection with the bombing attempts in Glasgow and London. Much was also made of the fact that Dr Haneef had a one-way ticket to India. However, Haneef’s wife had just had a baby and he was flying home to see her and the baby, as well as hoping to obtain visas for his family to join him in Australia.

The attempted attacks in London and Glasgow, even though they occurred on the other side of the world, intensified the Howard Government’s belief in the justification of its anti-terror legislation. Anxiety towards Muslims in Australia during this time had created an environment of suspicion in which the arrest of Dr Haneef seemed to be wholly justifiable. Public unease about the negative role Muslims could play in undermining secular society in Australia and in threatening national security, which had been intensified by coverage of Sheik Hilali’s sermon, was further reinforced by the apparent threat posed by Dr Haneef.

The time that elapsed between the arrest of Doctor Haneef and his eventual release was approximately a month (see Table 4) – in Australian terms an extraordinary length of time for a person to be held without a hearing. In the period following his arrest, the Howard government overtly questioned Dr Haneef’s character repeatedly, in an apparent attempt to stress his guilt, if only in the eyes of the media and the public, thereby reinforcing the necessity of the government’s anti-terrorism laws.

\textsuperscript{434} ibid.
News Limited’s coverage of Howard Government commentary on Haneef was initially supportive of the government’s actions.

Table 4: Summary of key phases and events in the detention of Dr Mohamed Haneef

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF KEY EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Bombing 29.06.07</td>
<td>Attack on Glasgow International Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest of Dr Haneef 02.07.07</td>
<td>Dr Mohamed Haneef arrested at Brisbane International Airport for suspected involvement in Glasgow attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granting of Bail 16.07.07</td>
<td>Magistrate orders that Dr Haneef should be released on bail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa cancelled 16.07.07</td>
<td>Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews immediately cancels Dr Haneef’s visa; Dr Haneef opts to remain in police custody rather than go to immigration detention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview transcript leaked 18.07.07</td>
<td>A transcript of Dr Haneef’s interview with the AFP is leaked to the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Limited story on Gold Coast attack plan 22.07.07</td>
<td>News Limited newspapers’ carry unsubstantiated reports AFP are investigating Haneef’s alleged involvement in Gold Coast terror plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPP withdraws charge 27.07.07</td>
<td>All charges against Dr Haneef are dropped by the DPP due to no prospect of conviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Haneef leaves Australia 28.07.07</td>
<td>Dr Haneef’s passport is returned and he boards a flight home to India</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Political and Media Representations of Dr Mohamed Haneef

Political commentary about Dr Haneef in the period immediately following his arrest, and the way the media represented these comments, heightened pre-existing apprehension about Muslims in Australia. A 2006 parliamentary inquiry’s review of security and counter-terrorism legislation, headed by Simon Sheller Q.C, concluded that the Howard Government’s 2005 anti-terrorism laws had impacted most strongly

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436 Each phase begins with the first mention of the relevant event to allow for the time lag between the happening and the release of government statements and media reporting.
on Muslim Australians, and that they now felt under greater surveillance and suspicion. The Haneef case proved to be a particularly high profile example of the negative effects that the new anti-terror laws had on Muslims in Australia.

The majority of government comments in relation to Dr Haneef were made by Kevin Andrews, John Howard, Alexander Downer, and Philip Ruddock (see Table 5). These comments took the form of media releases, interviews (including doorstop interviews) or press conferences. My analysis demonstrated that while the political commentary during this period used negative terms like “terrorists” and “threat”, usually it did not directly associate the alleged actions of Dr Haneef with the Muslim community in Australia. I found that the majority of the comments were made as a result of the respective portfolios involved – that is, they were consistent with the minister’s responsibilities.

Table 5: Tracking of Howard Government comments, 2 July–27 August 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>SPEAKER</th>
<th>POLITICAL ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 Monday 2 July</td>
<td>Attorney-General Philip Ruddock doorstop interview 11 July 2007</td>
<td>- An extension of time for holding Dr Haneef and satisfied the judicial officer at each point. They ought to be pursued and if there is evidence of offences appropriate steps should be taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 Monday 9 July</td>
<td>Prime Minister John Howard doorstop interview Launceston 14 July 2007</td>
<td>- Dr Haneef is entitled like any other person to a presumption of innocence but all of this is a reminder that terrorism is a global threat. You can’t pick and choose where you fight terrorism, say I’ll fight it over there but I won’t fight it here. It’s also fair to say that the anti-terrorism laws that this Government has enacted are all to their very last clause needed. And I have said before that if we need to strengthen them, we will strengthen them in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 Monday 16 July</td>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Kevin Andrews doorstop interview Sydney 18 July 2007</td>
<td>- Dr Haneef being related to his two cousins, it’s much more detailed about activities than simply a familial relationship. We’re not targeting people from any particular areas. And it’s not aimed at a particular nationality or a particular racial group or religious group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer 18 July 2007 Press Release/PR</td>
<td>- India and Australia have a memorandum of understanding on counter-terrorism and we’ve had good cooperation in recent times on counter terrorism. We keep the Indians as fully informed as we can about the circumstances surrounding both the charges being brought against Dr Haneef</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alexander Downer doorstop interview 26 July 2007
- I have, unlike the Labor Party, confidence in the Australian Federal Police, I have confidence in our courts and I have confidence in the Director of Public Prosecutions and his office.

John Howard doorstop interview 27 July 2007
- I do stand by Kevin Andrews’ handling of the case. I think he’s acted correctly and in good faith at all times.

Alexander Downer doorstop interview 27 July 2007
- The Federal Government actually hasn’t been charging anybody. I think this is the Labor narrative - that the Federal Government controls the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions - we no more do that than state Labor Governments control the state police and the state DPPs.

Kevin Andrews 28 July 2007 Press release/PR
- Solicitor General has examined all material and has advised me that the decision to cancel Dr Haneef’s visa was open to me on the material presented by the AFP, and that it was within my discretion.

Week 5 Monday 30 July
Kevin Andrews 30 July 2007 Press release/PR
- I exercised my powers under the Migration Act to cancel the visa of Dr Mohamed Haneef. I have ensured that the evidence and the information I based my decision on remains valid.

Kevin Andrews 31 July 2007 Press release/PR
- Material from the AFP on which I could validly make a decision to cancel Dr Haneef’s visa includes matters already known including the cousins in the UK, the lending of money, mobile phone and sim card.

AFP investigators suspect that the Internet conversation between Haneef and his brother may be evidence of Haneef’s growing awareness of the conspiracy to plan and prepare acts of terrorism in London and Glasgow, and consider Haneef’s attempted urgent departure from Australia to be highly suspicious and may reflect Haneef’s awareness of the conspiracy.

Week 6 Monday 6 August
John Howard media interview 31 July 2007
- The cancellation of his visa was wholly legitimate and I can’t see the circumstances in which it’s going to be restored, certainly in the near future.

John Howard media interview 2 August 2007
- I defend the role of the AFP which is protecting the Australian people against potential terrorist attacks so when people put the boot into the coppers they ought to keep that in mind.

Week 7 Monday 13 August
Kevin Andrews media conference Sydney 21 August 2007
- I made the decision to cancel Dr Haneef's visa in the national interest.

Further information actually heightened my suspicion in relation to Dr Haneef. No information that actually lessens my suspicion in relation to Dr Haneef. I will continue to act for the national security of this country.

Week 8 Monday 20 August
Kevin Andrews doorstop interview Adelaide 23 August 2007
- Legislation went to a matter of a terrorist organisation and the DPP; decided that element could not be made out beyond reasonable doubt. Now that doesn’t determine that Dr Haneef is innocent of having associations.

- Mick Keelty [Head of AFP] said information should not be released because it would jeopardise those investigations in terms of the national security of this country.

Source: Parliament of Australia

The Coalition, publicly at least, always offered unequivocal support for Minister Kevin Andrews and for the AFP’s handling of the situation. In a doorstop interview...

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given on 9 July 2007 Howard deflected any questions about the detention of Dr Haneef, stating, “I can’t talk about operational matters”. The Prime Minister gave a doorstop interview on 14 July 2007 in which he again refused to be drawn on the case against Dr Haneef, stating, “I can’t comment on Haneef. I will make no comment at all on the substance of the allegations against Mr Haneef”. However, Howard commented that the arrest of Dr Haneef did justify his anti-terrorism laws, stating, “The anti-terrorism laws that this Government has enacted are all to their very last clause needed”. In the space of a 158 word statement, Howard used the term “terrorism” three times as well as referring to the “global threat” which it posed.

The refusal of the Prime Minister to comment on the Dr Haneef case continued at a joint press conference given with the New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma on 15 July 2007. When asked about case details, Howard replied, “I have ongoing discussions with the AFP about all of these matters and I do not give a running commentary on what I am told”.

*The Australian* newspaper began questioning the Howard Government’s handling of the case on 20 July 2007, that is 18 days after Haneef was first detained and eight days before Haneef was released and his passport returned. Mark Dodd and Sid Marris reported that Howard was avoiding questions about the arrest of Dr Haneef. The article also contrasted the Howard Government’s comments with a statement from Dr Haneef’s lawyer, Peter Russo. The article quoted Russo’s comment that he felt that the Howard Government had overreacted in its handling of the charges given that it was “a fairly minor case. This fellow obviously wasn’t going to set off bombs


441 Ibid.

442 Ibid.


in Australia”. Russo was also cautiously critical of the AFP and its handling of the arrest.446

However, not all New Limited journalists were critical of the Howard Government’s handling of the case at this time. The Daily Telegraph ran a front-page news article on Dr Mohammad Asif Ali, one of Dr Haneef’s colleagues at Gold Coast Hospital who had been questioned by police due to his friendship with Dr Haneef. Dr Asif Ali was prominently featured in a half-page photo under the headline, “Enemy Within”.447 Originally from Fiji, Dr Asif Ali had come to Australia after working in the UK. Some weeks after he was questioned in relation to the Haneef case it was revealed that Dr Asif Ali was under investigation by Queensland Health because he had falsified his resumé, having claimed an additional period of three months employment in order to gain medical registration in the UK. He had used the same resumé in applying for Queensland Health. None of this had any connection with terrorist activities and no such associations were ever proved.

In a doorstop interview on 27 July 2007, the day that the DPP dropped the charges against Haneef, Howard restated his support for Andrews, commenting emphatically: “I do stand by Kevin Andrews’ handling of the case. I think he’s acted correctly and in good faith at all times”.448

When the Howard Government’s management of the charges against the doctor started to be more robustly criticised, firstly in the media and then by the Opposition, the Prime Minister argued that the case details were a matter solely for AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty. News Limited journalist John Kerin reported in The Australian Financial Review on 28 July 2007 that the Howard Government contended in the strongest terms that it had not at any time during the case attempted to exert undue influence on the judicial process, quoting Howard’s claim that he had no

445 ibid.
446 ibid.
influence in proceedings because “prime ministers don’t conduct prosecutions, nor do attorneys-general”. Nevertheless, Kerin – formerly a longstanding senior Labor politician who was briefly Treasurer in the Hawke Government – was critical of the Howard Government’s role in the collapsed case against Haneef.

Also on 27 July 2007, The Australian reported Dr Haneef’s solicitor Peter Russo’s criticism of the way in which the Howard Government had dealt with his client. The article reported Russo’s statement that the government refused to soften its stand and that Minister Andrews was determined to have his client deported. The Australian also reported on Prime Minister John Howard’s continued backing of Kevin Andrews’ action in cancelling Dr Haneef’s visa, with Howard remarking that Andrews “acted under the powers given to him under the Migration Act”. The article referred to “terrorism” four times, including reiterating that Dr Haneef was charged with “supporting terrorism” and mentioning “the terrorism related case against [Dr Haneef]”. However, these usages were factual, not speculative. The Australian reported on the story objectively and did not make any reference to Muslims or Islam.

In The Courier Mail on 30 July 2007, after Haneef had returned to India, Clinton Porteous reported that John Howard’s electoral popularity had not been harmed by the Haneef case. Porteous was supportive of Howard, commenting that the “collapse of the case against Mohamed Haneef” had not hurt the government and that “Howard would give the Coalition the best chance of victory”. However, there is no doubt that as soon as it was clear that the case against Haneef could not proceed, Howard was concerned about the potential electoral damage and the damage to his anti-terrorism legislation, repeatedly expressing his support for the actions taken by

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451 ibid.
452 ibid.
454 ibid.
Andrews and the AFP in ways that seemed designed to suggest to the public and the media that no other course of action was possible in the circumstances. He also distanced the government from the decision-making processes in relation to Haneef.

Nevertheless, in the face of rising criticism of how the government had behaved, in a media interview on 31 July 2007, John Howard again attempted to justify the cancelling of Dr Haneef’s work visa, arguing that the “cancellation of his visa was wholly legitimate”. During a press conference given at Parliament House the same day, Prime Minister Howard stated that Minister Andrews had his complete support “in the handling of this thing”. In a media interview on 2 August 2007, the Prime Minister again defended the role of the AFP, which, he argued, was “protecting the Australian people against potential terrorist attacks so when people put the boot into the coppers they ought to keep that in mind”.

5.3.1 Alexander Downer and the media

From the outset, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was as supportive as Howard of the actions against Haneef. In an interview on 12 July 2007, Downer publicly defended both the AFP and the government’s handling of the case. In his comments, Downer mentioned the Howard Government’s anti-terrorism legislation, however he did not make any reference to the Muslim community in Australia. In a media release on 18 July 2007, Downer again made reference to the terrorism aspect of the case, stating, “India and Australia have a memorandum of understanding on counter-

While speaking at a press conference on 23 July 2007, Downer attacked Labor’s criticism of the AFP’s handling of the case, commenting, “You go out and bag the Australian Federal Police, you attack and call them keystone cops and that will reflect incidentally on the Howard Government”. This seems to suggest that the opposition was using the Haneef case as a political weapon in order to gain an electoral advantage.

In a series of doorstop interviews given at the end of July, Downer again tried to reinforce the independent role of the AFP and the DPP in the case against Dr Haneef. On 26 July 2007, he stated they he had “confidence in the Australian Federal Police, and I have confidence in the Director of Public Prosecutions”. On 27 July 2007, he reiterated that the “federal government actually hasn’t been charging anybody”.

5.3.2 Kevin Andrews: from media spin to media criticism

In his initial public comments about the Haneef case, Kevin Andrews not surprisingly stressed the seriousness of the concerns however, like other government figures, he did not use the situation to extrapolate to Muslims in general. In this respect, the government’s discourses about Haneef differed from those that had characterised the Howard Government’s response to Hilali’s sermon. In a press conference on 16 July 2007, Andrews announced that he had revoked the surgeon’s visa under the Migration Act, crediting information provided by ASIO and the AFP for his decision. While he referred to Dr Haneef by name 19 times, and used the term “terrorism” three times in

conjunction with it, Andrews made no reference to Muslims or Islam.\(^{463}\) Andrews also issued a media release that day which validated his decision to revoke the visa and focused only on the particular details of the case.

On 16 July, the *Herald Sun* immediately reported the Government’s insistence that the AFP’s case and cancellation of Dr Haneef’s work visa following his release on bail were both justified.\(^ {464}\) The article also included some critical views of the Government, quoting the analysis of Dr Haneef’s barrister, Stephen Keim, that the case against Haneef was “extremely weak”.\(^ {465}\) There was also a quote from Dr Haneef's wife, Firdous, who was highly critical, saying that grounds for her husband’s continued detention were “totally baseless and unfair”.\(^ {466}\) She concluded: “my husband is innocent, and I know Allah will help us”.\(^ {467}\) This last comment provided one of the few instances where the Haneef family’s religious beliefs were mentioned in the media coverage.\(^ {468}\) In a doorstop interview in Sydney on 18 July 2007, Kevin Andrews made indirect reference to Dr Haneef’s Muslim faith but this was in stressing that the Howard Government was *not* “targeting people from any particular areas. And it’s not aimed at a particular nationality or a particular racial group or religious group”.\(^ {469}\)

I mentioned above the Dodd and Marris article in *The Australian* on 20 July 2007 in which the paper began to question the government’s handling of the Haneef case. *The Australian* further criticised the Howard Government, Andrews and the AFP on the same day. The article examined both the police affidavit and the 142-page record of Dr Haneef’s first police interview, finding that there were major discrepancies in both


\(^{465}\) ibid.

\(^{466}\) ibid.

\(^{467}\) ibid.

\(^{468}\) ibid.

documents.\textsuperscript{470} The Minister chose not to answer \textit{The Australian} in person, leaving a spokesperson to give his response.\textsuperscript{471}

In a series of media releases following the arrest of Dr Haneef, Kevin Andrews defended the action, then, after the charges were dropped, in a media release on 28 July, Andrews retrospectively defended his actions, emphasising his faith that the “Solicitor-General has examined all material and has advised me that the decision to cancel Dr Haneef’s visa was open to me on the material presented by the AFP and that it was within my discretion”.\textsuperscript{472}

By the end of July, however, the media had become highly critical of the Howard Government. It was argued that the haste with which the new anti-terrorism laws had been applied in the case of Dr Haneef had exposed shortfalls in counter-terrorism arrangements, such that these arrangements appeared to be politically motivated and lacking in safeguards to ensure “against manipulation by authorities”.\textsuperscript{473} In a story in \textit{The Australian} on 28 July 2007, Cameron Stewart strongly condemned Andrews, observing that the “incompetence of Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews”\textsuperscript{474} had damaged the potential effectiveness of future anti-terrorist actions. Stewart also suggested that Andrews’ heavy-handed use of immigration laws had shattered the public’s trust in the government’s “fight against terrorism in this country for years”.\textsuperscript{475}

The relatively independent nature of the majority of the reporting I surveyed suggests that in the later weeks of the case against Dr Haneef the Howard Government mostly failed in influencing either the tone or the focus of the media’s coverage. This was despite the best efforts of Minister Andrews. Even after Dr Haneef had left Australia, Andrews gave an interview (29 July 2007) in which he stated that Dr Haneef’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item M. Dodd & S. Marris.
\item ibid.
\item Aulich & Wettenhall (eds.), p. 247.
\item ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
lawyers had indicated that the doctor had “wanted to get out of Australia as soon as possible”, a comment that, Andrews remarked, “rather heightens, rather than lessens, my suspicions”.476 This would seem an almost wilful misreading of the lawyers’ intentions in making their statement. In a press release issued on 31 July 2007, Andrews again used language that associated Dr Haneef with terrorist activities, saying that there was “evidence of Haneef’s growing awareness of the conspiracy to plan and prepare acts of terrorism in London and Glasgow”.477 Clearly the Minister was not willing to be satisfied with the judicial processes that had led to Dr Haneef’s release and even less willing to accept the problematics of his own part in pursuing the case so forcefully on what came to be understood to be markedly insufficient evidence.

In a doorstop interview given in Adelaide on 23 August 2007, Andrews was still arguing that the government’s actions were justified because of issues of security, and somewhat darkly suggesting that, “information should not be released because it would jeopardise those investigations in terms of the national security of this country”.478 In this interview, Andrews once more overtly restated his belief regarding Dr Haneef’s culpability, commenting that the lack of reasonable doubt “doesn’t determine that Dr Haneef is innocent of having [terrorist] associations”.479 However, in an article in Melbourne’s Herald Sun on 17 September 2007, lawyer Julian Burnside concluded that the whole affair was simply “another indication of the things that the Howard Government is prepared to do, especially in an election year”.480

476 Yasmeen, p. 282.
479 ibid.
5.3.3 Philip Ruddock’s changing position

There was apparently reluctance among government politicians to use language that would directly link the case against Dr Haneef with the wider Muslim community. In an interview with Attorney-General Philip Ruddock on the Sunday program of 8 July 2007, it was host Laurie Oakes (and not Ruddock) who made direct reference to whether Dr Haneef was possibly a member of a “radical Muslim group”. Dr Haneef was referred to by name three times, while as could be anticipated the interview also made reference to the attempted bombings in London. Ruddock’s statements during this period generally dealt more with the issue of foreign trained doctors working in Australia and did not focus on religion or the Muslim community in Australia.

In a doorstop interview on 11 July 2007, Ruddock again discussed the arrest of Dr Haneef, mentioning the surgeon by name four times. In the interview Ruddock commented on the threat from terrorism and the potential threat from up to 25 terrorists operating in Australia. While the tone of Ruddock’s comments questioned the innocence of Dr Haneef, he again did not refer to either Muslims or Islam. Analysis of the interview transcript demonstrates that over the course of the interview, Ruddock referred to “terror” (1), “terrorist” (2) and “terrorism” (2). The transcript of Ruddock’s interview did not reveal any usage of the terms “Muslim” or “Islam”. Philip Ruddock was questioned by The Australian on 20 July 2007 about the Howard Government’s handling of the detention of Dr Haneef. When asked whether he “had been misled by the AFP”, Ruddock’s office replied that he “did not want to discuss problems with the case”. On 21 July 2007, The Australian called on Ruddock to explain a series of “embarrassing and highly damaging bungles in the controversial

483 M. Dodd & S. Marris.
484 ibid.
case of detained terror suspect Mohamed Haneef”. At this stage, however, Ruddock was obviously keen to keep his views to himself. It might be observed that there is a noticeable change in Ruddock’s public discourses regarding Islam in Australia from the Hilali case to the Haneef case. This may simply be a function of the less direct relation of his portfolio to the Haneef case, but taken in conjunction with other instances I have mentioned of differences in government usage of “Muslim” and “Islam”, it may indicate a deliberate change in discursive practice.

5.4 Retrospectives and reflections

In an article on 1 August 2007 The Australian again condemned the immigration minister, expressing the view that by “seeking political opportunity in Dr Haneef, Andrews had succeeded only in highlighting things the government would no doubt rather were forgotten”. However, there were exceptions to the increasingly critical, and largely balanced way in which News Limited papers elected to report on the case against Dr Haneef after the initial events. For example, on 19 September 2007 in an article entitled “Sometimes law must prevent, not just punish”, The Australian’s Foreign Affairs Editor, Greg Sheridan, stated that the Howard Government should be given credit for standing firm on the case against the doctor. Sheridan argued that the government had “behaved entirely reasonably in the case against Mohamed Haneef, the Brisbane doctor accused of being a terrorist”. Vociferous in attacking those in the mass media who had criticised the government’s handling of the case, Sheridan contended that a free media is “one of the most effective tools in confronting the terrorist challenge”. He concluded by stressing that the media has a responsibility when determining and placing “information and interpretations in the public area”.

While he did not use the terms “Muslim” or “Islam” in the article Sheridan made

488 ibid.
489 ibid.
frequent reference to both “terrorists” and “terrorism” in connection with Dr Haneef. Sheridan’s defence of the Howard Government’s actions was, however, rare in the sampled media coverage.

On the whole, once the government’s evidence against Dr Haneef started to be published in the media the case quickly began to fall apart, and the longer the Howard Government tried to pursue the case the more they tended to appear to be merely vindictive. My study of political comments between Dr Haneef’s detention on 2 July 2007 and the overturning of the cancellation of his visa on 20 August 2007 found that there was a consistency in the type of negative language used by the Howard Government when commenting on the details of the case and the character of Dr Haneef. Conversely, my survey of Opposition and media statements noted that there was also an overall consensus amongst critics, especially after the first two weeks from his arrest, that the case against Dr Haneef was handled in an inappropriate manner by both the government and the AFP. However, my research also found that most of the political discourse by the Howard Government did not make any overt reference to Islam or Muslims, either in relation to events in this country or in general – a marked difference from the discourses about Hilali some months earlier. Analysis of the data found that while the Howard Government’s commentary frequently attacked Dr Haneef primarily as an individual who was part of a potentially larger terrorist plot, it was reticent about using language which would place the situation within an Islamic fundamentalist inspired movement, and equally reluctant about extrapolating from the apparent threat posed by Haneef to the broader Muslim communities of Australia.

The main dynamics of the Dr Haneef case, and the discernible change in the media’s attitude towards the government’s version of events, happened over a relatively short time. A study of newspaper reporting of political comment found that the period between July and the beginning of August 2007 was the most concentrated time for media coverage of the case.\(^{490}\) During this time, which was just over a month, all the

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significant events occurred that came to be associated with the case against Dr Haneef. These included his ongoing detention without charge followed eventually by his charging, the withdrawal of the charges by the Director of Public Prosecutions, the minister’s cancellation of Dr Haneef’s visa, and finally his departure from Australia. As the Press Council observed, the “rapid trajectory of the story’s development in this period was accompanied by significant shifts in the media’s approach to the story”.

It was only four days into the detention of Dr Haneef that the government apparently began to suspect that their public relations was starting to go against them, with the media increasingly critical of both the AFP and Howard Government’s handling of the case. When the transcript of the first interrogation was leaked to the media, the Prime Minister was enraged, publicly claiming that “Whoever has been responsible is not trying to make sure that justice is done”. The Howard Government’s handling of the case against Haneef also showed what seemed to be a malign determination on the part of the government to use any avenue possible in their attempt to prosecute Dr Haneef. As Prime Minister, Howard never strayed from his conviction that the anti-terror initiatives enacted by his government were necessary. He even argued after the Haneef case was over that it could be important to close a few loopholes to make the laws even stronger: “the anti-terrorism laws that this government has enacted are all, to their very last needed…[however] if we need to strengthen them we will”.

In late 2007 The Australian published a series of emails between AFP officers and staff in the Immigration Minister’s office which suggested the existence of a “secret plan” to ensure that Haneef would remain in custody even if granted bail. The Howard Government vehemently denied the existence of such a plan, a spokesperson for Andrews stating, “There was absolutely no deal or arrangement or contingency

491 ibid.
492 ibid.
494 Marr, p. 103.
instigated or discussed by the minister or any of his staff at all, ever.” On 23 August, *The Australian* reported that the AFP felt compelled to deny publicly that it had “improperly leaked information” and also accused Dr Haneef’s lawyers of “running their case in the media”.496

Despite efforts by the Howard Government to manage the direction of the media coverage and maintain its negative tone, News Limited newspaper’s discourses rapidly changed from mostly supportive of the government’s actions to being more antagonistic towards the Howard Government, with many in the press suggesting that Dr Haneef’s detention was overkill.497

5.4 Conclusion

News Limited coverage of Howard Government was at times problematical. The Australian Press Council’s (APC) review of the print media’s coverage of reporting on Dr Haneef highlighted the fact that, in the early stages of the case, the media was primarily concerned with the narrow law and order dimensions of the case (the dimensions which were of prime concern to the Howard Government).498 During this time any human rights dimensions went largely overlooked. It was only as the case proceeded and gathered momentum that these broader concerns began to feature more prominently in the press coverage of the case.499 The trajectory of press coverage was identified by the APC was as follows:

- Initial coverage in News Limited newspapers supported the Howard Government version of events
- Greater use of non-government information sources with a shift in reporting to one of human rights/interest

497 ibid.
499 ibid.
• News outlets most commonly adopted a tone that was questioning or critical of the government as the course of the first month’s coverage progressed.

During the first 14 day period of his arrest journalists on a number of occasions negatively described Dr Haneef’s alleged links with the terrorists in Britain. The media’s early focus on the “threat” aspect of the story distracted from any human interest aspect. One of the reasons for the negative tone of the reporting in this initial period was that the majority of the information being supplied to journalists was generated by Howard Government sources. The tone of the reporting did however alter following this opening period: a greater use of non-government sources meant that the focus changed to human rights and due process.

It is of particular note that while News Limited newspapers increasingly focused on the human interest aspect of the Dr Haneef case there was little evidence of attempts to provide background contextualisation. There were scarcely any efforts to Dr Haneef’s arrest in a larger political or social context. The reasons behind the attacks in London and Glasgow were not explored in the majority of sampled news stories, with coverage instead concentrating on the events surrounding Haneef’s arrest in Brisbane. Further investigative journalism into the London and Glasgow attacks could have allayed fears that a similar terrorist “cell” existed in Australia. Instead, in the first days after Dr Haneef’s arrest the majority of Murdoch media coverage reported on information provided by the government and the AFP. In focusing on the events surrounding his immediate detention the News Limited press failed to explore the reasons for the international events which led directly to his arrest.

However, the data reveals that following the initial period the great majority of the Murdoch press articles openly questioned the Howard Government’s version of events, a fact verified by both the language used in, and the tone of the overall coverage of the case. It was also of note that although News Limited media outlets did on occasion make mention of Dr Haneef’s religion, it was never the primary focus of the news story. In its content analysis examination of the reporting of the case against Dr Haneef, the Australian Press Council’s report, *State of the Print News Media in Australia Report 2008*, noted that the most common tone of stories published in newspapers was critical of the Howard Government. The APC investigation revealed
that the newspapers were to a degree performing their fourth estate role, functioning as a check on the government and authorities. However, the report also pointed out that it was necessary to acknowledge that the audited newspapers only adopted a critical approach “more than a week into the story’s coverage”.\textsuperscript{500} Once they began to question, the media were especially critical of the political motivation of the Howard Government, focusing on the then Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Kevin Andrews who, after cancelling Dr Haneef’s visa, undertook a round of media interviews and issued press statements which were “replete with insinuations against Dr Haneef”.\textsuperscript{501} Even when the Howard Government had been advised by ASIO that they had no evidence of any wrong doing by Dr Haneef, Minister Kevin Andrews and AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty chose to vigorously pursue the matter.

An examination of samples of political commentary made by other members of the Howard Government found that these were mainly issued in justification of Kevin Andrews’ actions. Although it was politically strategic for Prime Minister Howard to defend his minister’s actions in the Dr Haneef case publicly on numerous occasions, these remarks did not resort to racist stereotypes. For although political commentary at times alleged clear links between Dr Haneef and the terrorist attacks in Britain, there was generally no attempt to correlate these terrorist attacks and the arrest of Dr Haneef with the wider Muslim community in Australia. Furthermore, it was promising to find that media coverage mostly tended to avoid racist Islamic stereotypes, such as referring to the martyr’s 72 virgins (houri), when discussing Dr Haneef.

There was a discernible change in the majority of commentary made by members of the Howard Government. This was in marked contrast to statements made during the criticism of Sheik Hilali the previous year or during events such as the arrival of the Tampa or the Bali bombing. A search of this data suggests that the members of the government were wary of associating religion with the case of Dr Haneef, instead placing it within the context of the “terror” threat. One of the explanations for this

\textsuperscript{500} ibid.
\textsuperscript{501} ibid, p. 282.
could be that Dr Haneef was an Indian doctor working in Australia on a 457 visa rather than an Australian resident or citizen. That is, there were diplomatic issues to consider. Another reason for the lack of religious stereotyping may have been the way in which the story developed with its emphasis on civil rights, which superseded in media coverage the “threat” Dr Haneef posed as a “terrorist”.

The research revealed that the overall tone of the stories in the analysed samples questioned the information coming from the Howard Government. My analysis of the articles found that there was mostly no direct correlation between Dr Haneef and the fact that he was a Muslim unless it had any immediate bearing on the case. It is also statistically noteworthy that the terms “Muslim” and “terrorism” were not used in conjunction with each other in the majority of the relevant articles in the newspapers examined as part of this analysis (News Limited’s The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun, The Courier Mail). It is also significant that images of Dr Haneef with his wife were usually not positioned within a religious context any more strongly than including the image of Mrs Haneef wearing the hijab.

While her overall discourse remained clearly supportive of the government’s handling of the Haneef case, Sally Neighbour, writing in The Australian in November 2007, examined whether there had been any attempt at pressuring or influencing the AFP, especially with regard to how they utilised their recently granted powers of detention. Neighbour reported that a senior Australian counter-terrorism officer claimed that they had been directed to “charge as many suspects as possible” so that the validity and effectiveness of the Howard Government’s anti-terrorist laws could be tested.502

The handling of the case against Dr Haneef served to further compromise the Howard Government’s moral credentials in the lead up to the 2007 election.503 The problem lay not with the way in which distortions had the potential to vilify Muslims, but more with what the government and some sections of the media viewed as being the

essence of Islam itself in the period after 2001. Immigration and Citizenship Minister Kevin Andrews and Attorney-General Philip Ruddock had argued that detention was necessary and in the national interest, and in the process employed more than 200 federal and state police in the investigation. The AFP seized and analysed 30,000 documents, including personal medical files that were found on Dr Haneef’s computer, though none of these documents were found to be incriminating.

Ultimately, the government’s mishandling of the case against Dr Haneef severely damaged the Howard Government’s credibility and made the Prime Minister appear to be disingenuous. Media reporting of the Howard Government’s comments and its attempted selective release of information during the arrest did have some effect on representations of Muslims. However the majority of the sampled articles in News Limited newspapers eventually critiqued the government’s handling of the situation, a factor that would be damaging for the government in an election year.

504 Van Onselen (ed.) p. 18.
CHAPTER SIX: DEBATE OVER MUSLIM ASSIMILATION – THE HIJAB

Previous chapters have explored the representations of individuals as a means to examine representations Muslim Australians in media reporting of Howard Government discourse. This chapter focuses instead on the hijab as a cultural signifier. Such an approach opens out to a consideration of the extent to which statements made by government ministers were directed at all Muslims in Australia, and/or had the discursive effect of negatively representing Muslim communities. My objective in this chapter is to analyse coverage of political discourse in the News Limited press, to discover in this case how the newspapers constructed representations not of individuals or ethnic groups, but of a key cultural signifier. Islamic dress – particularly clothing for women – has frequently been the target of criticism that it is both incompatible with and a challenge to contemporary secular Australian society. I chose to concentrate my analysis on the hijab because this is the item of clothing most commonly referred to in media reporting of political discourse in the same period I have discussed in the other two case studies.

Here I examine representations in the Murdoch press of comments made by ministers in the Howard Government about the hijab, which came to be perceived as emblematic of Islam. The high degree of public visibility associated with the wearing of the hijab, and the extent of negative reaction to it, informed representations of Muslim Australians per se. This chapter also discusses how perceptions about gender politics and women’s rights in Islamic cultural settings were used by (predominantly) female members of the Howard Government, such as Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella, to criticise the wearing of the hijab in public in Australia, and, by implication, to negatively portray Islam in Australia.

6.1 Traditional Islamic Clothing

Orientalism situates women within the exotic unknown, as mysterious beings kept from society. Edward Said described how in western representations, “Oriental”
culture was positioned as an exclusively male province where women were usually seen as the creature of a male power-fantasy.\textsuperscript{506} In this discourse, Said noted, women were simple-minded expressions of unlimited sensuality that were locked away in a harem and covered in cloth to protect them from the male gaze.\textsuperscript{507} These Orientalist misrepresentations of Muslim women have continued into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

Traditional Islamic clothing such as the hijab has been used to support the assertion that women occupy a wholly submissive role in Muslim society while also being taken to be symbolic of Islamic people’s alleged unwillingness to integrate into modern secular society. David McKnight noted that the primary target of a perceived “refusal” to integrate and so be part of a cohesive community has been the traditional forms of female Muslim clothing, including the hijab.\textsuperscript{508} This subservient representation has certainly played a role in discussions about Australian Muslim women and their assimilation into this country’s secular society. These debates have not only contributed to misunderstanding of Islam and its cultures, but also to confusion regarding Islamic female dress.

\textit{6.1.1 Overview of Hijab}

There are many different forms of female Islamic clothing, with the terms frequently being misunderstood or incorrectly applied. Female Islamic clothing includes not only the \textit{hijab}, a headscarf; but also the \textit{niqab}, face veiling; the \textit{burqa}, or full length body covering that only reveals the eyes, most commonly used in parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of the Arabian peninsula; and the \textit{jilbab}, a cloak/coat.\textsuperscript{509} For consistency this study will use the anglicised form of spelling of \textit{burkha}. The hijab, then, is a scarf-like piece of cloth worn by Muslim women in some Islamic cultures to cover the hair and is an expression of piety, based on interpretations of the Qur’an in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{506} Said, 2003, p. 207.
\item \textsuperscript{507} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{509} Akbarzadeh (ed.) p. 164.
\end{itemize}
relation to modesty.\textsuperscript{510} It is distinct in its appearance from other forms of female Muslim clothing such as the burkha and niqab in that it is only meant to serve as a cover for a woman’s hair. These terms have often been used interchangeably and erroneously in public discussions about Islam in Australia. However, what each clothing article has in common is that, when wearing these items, statistics have shown that since 2001 Muslim women have been subject to an increase in negative rhetoric, misconceptions and stereotyping.\textsuperscript{511}

The hijab, as an article of clothing, has been greatly misrepresented and misunderstood in the West. Political and media discussion often reproduces stereotypes in which “Muslim equals religious”, and more specifically, “Muslim woman equals hijab”.\textsuperscript{512} These discourses potentially run the risk of disengaging Muslim women from any public discussion. Misconceptions regarding the ethnic origin of the hijab have also proved to be problematic, with purdah becoming linked in Western writing with the beginning of Islam. However, the concept of purdah, the veiling of women that is now connected with certain Islamic societies, is in fact a cultural practice adopted from other cultures, particularly the Persian and Byzantine, and its origins are not necessarily lodged in power relations between genders.\textsuperscript{513} Nevertheless, in western Orientalist discourse the hijab is often associated with female subjugation.

In Australian political and media commentary following 2001, the wearing of the hijab has frequently been placed within the context of women’s rights and assumptions regarding Islamic gender oppression. Sondra Hale observed that there are few other examples where one element in the culture symbolises and means as much as the veil.\textsuperscript{514} The hijab has clearly been viewed as an ideological as well as physical object. Leila Ahmed argues that it is the idea of the veil rather than the veil’s material

\textsuperscript{511} ibid.
\textsuperscript{512} Dreher and Ho, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{513} Rane, 2010, p. 106.
presence that is the material signifier.\textsuperscript{515} Such negative assumptions are based on the belief that Muslim women and their rights in relation to dress are based on gender oppressive principles of Shari‘a law.\textsuperscript{516}

Leti Volpp observes that in this “othering of gender” headscarves (hijab), polygamous marriages and female clitoridectomy became means by which Islamic law was used to portray suppression gender rights for Muslim women.\textsuperscript{517} Susan Okin finds that Western representations of Muslim communities frequently suggest that they are patriarchal, invoking Shari‘a sanctioned gender-based violence to maintain traditional cultural practices such as the wearing of the veil.\textsuperscript{518}

For Muslim women, the wearing of the hijab in Western society often comes with a sense of confusion.\textsuperscript{519} They frequently describe the experience of wearing the hijab as one of empowerment since for the wearer it equalises gender subjectivity.\textsuperscript{520} However, a conflict also emerges, for while in their own communities they feel empowered by Islam and by wearing hijab, they are “represented in the secular, popular media as being oppressed”.\textsuperscript{521} Widespread misconceptions have also meant that because garments such as the hijab function as a highly visible form of religious identification, wearers have encountered increased harassment in Australia since 2001.

Australia’s Muslim women encompass a whole spectrum of practices. That is, they are a culturally diverse reflection of Islam itself. Some Muslim women wear the hijab at work or whenever they are outside the home while others never adopt it at all.

\textsuperscript{520} L. Ahmed, A Quiet Revolution: The Veil’s Resurgence from the Middle East to America, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011. p. 4.
Wearing the hijab does not in itself indicate a woman’s commitment to Islam or the extent to which she considers herself to be an Australian. Nevertheless, especially since 2001, wearing the hijab has attracted increasingly unfavourable attention from some in Australian society.\footnote{J. Hussain, 	extit{Islam, its Law and Society}, Federation Press, Annandale, 2007, p. 205.} The continual linking of the hijab and Muslim women is erroneous, with a survey suggesting that the majority of Muslim women in Australia do not wear the hijab at all or do not wear it on a fulltime basis.\footnote{A. Hebbani & C. Wills, “How Muslim women in Australia navigate through media (mis)representations of hijab/burqa”, 	extit{Australian Journal of Communication}, Vol. 39, No. 1, June 2012. pp. 87-100.} Significant published research on Australian Muslims and in particular on Muslim women show that the percentage wearing the hijab “would not make it into double digits”.\footnote{Hussain.}

Discrimination against Muslims in Australia is very often gender based, with studies showing that Muslim women experience bias far more frequently than Muslim men.\footnote{C. Ho & T. Dreher, “Not another hijab row: new conversations on gender, race, religion and the making of communities”, 	extit{International feminist Journal of Politics}, Vol. 11, Issue 1, March 2009. pp. 114-125.} The Australian Human Rights Commission’s research project IsmaU found the problem of discrimination to be far worse for people who appear to be readily identifiable as Muslim. Muslim women who choose to wear traditional Islamic dress (like the hijab) were found to be “especially afraid of being abused or attacked”.\footnote{HREOC, IsmaU –Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians, 2004, p. 3, http://hreoc.gov.au/racial-discrimination/isma/report/pdf/ISMA_complete.pdf, accessed 7 March 2012.} The commission also cites media reporting on the public debate about the wearing of the hijab in the period after 9/11 as having unnecessarily (and negatively) inflamed community feeling towards Muslims.\footnote{ibid.}

6.2 Banning the Hijab?

This section examines comments made by Howard Government ministers Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella in order to better understand the media coverage that followed. Their comments calling for the banning of the hijab feed into already
existing prejudices in Australia and served to inflame the debate surrounding integration of Muslims into Australian society.

In the period after September 11 2001 there was an upsurge in heightened awareness about the different forms of Islamic clothing, including the hijab, and their place in Australian society. In November 2002, the Rev. Fred Nile, a conservative independent member of the New South Wales parliament, asked the Howard Government whether it would be considering introducing a ban on traditional Muslim female clothing in light of overseas attacks where the perpetrator had worn the garment.528 The government’s reply was that it would not, with Alexander Downer commenting that it would be possible to hide things under a raincoat, but “I don’t think we are going to ban raincoats”.529 Nevertheless, Prime Minister Howard refused to reject the comments outright, saying that, “[he] understood Mr Nile’s concerns, but it was important that Islamic people don’t feel they’re being singled out”.530

Nevertheless, over the coming two years various media reports continued to raise the question of Islamic dress and its potential connection to terrorism. The tone of such media coverage was reinforced by comments made by Howard Government ministers. These comments, made initially by Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella, would focus media attention on the hijab and its place within Australian secular society.

In 2004, Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop responded to France’s ban on visible religious symbols, such as the hijab, in schools by stating that in Australia “schools and their communities should have the power to ban students from wearing Muslim veils”.531 Her aim was clearly to distance such decisions from the purview of

the Federal Minister for Education by stressing the right of schools to determine their own dress policies. While they briefly drew the hijab into the national political spotlight, Julie Bishop’s comments were viewed within the context of the debate that was occurring in Europe, rather than being taken as a personal or ministerial viewpoint regarding what schools should or should not do. (A decade later, as Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop defended “the rights of Muslims to wear the burqa, saying Australians fight for a kind of society where all types of religions and clothing are accepted”\textsuperscript{532}; and in 2016 she wore a head scarf while on an official visit to Iran, which also led to an outcry from far right figures.)

However, in 2005 the hijab became a major focus for both political and media discussion. The catalyst on this occasion was remarks made by backbencher Bronwyn Bishop in federal parliament, in which she raised the prospect of banning the wearing of head scarves in all government schools. The comments Bishop made at the end of August 2005 were highly confrontational, including the comment, “I would simply say that in Nazi Germany, Nazis felt free and comfortable. That is not the sort of definition of freedom that I want for my country.”\textsuperscript{533} Bishop’s remarks were widely reported by the print media, with the tone of the New Limited coverage primarily focusing on her negative comments. The headlines “Ban Muslim scarves in schools: Bishop” in \textit{The Daily Telegraph} and “MP joins push to ban scarfs [sic]” in the \textit{Herald Sun}, both published on 29 August, illustrated the tone of language used in these news stories. While the newspaper coverage was not in itself negative about Muslims, these initial stories did not offer any opposing commentary to counterbalance Bronwyn Bishop’s remarks.

Fellow Liberal Sophie Mirabella quickly supported Bronwyn Bishop’s comments. In a speech given in federal parliament on 5 September 2005 Mirabella attacked those who compared the hijab to other items of religious clothing such as the yarmulke,


wimple, turban, nun’s habit or biretta. In her speech Mirabella stated that, “None of these other articles [yarmulke, turban, and nun’s habit] represents the uncompromising retrograde curtailment of a woman’s rights as does the hijab”.534 Stressing the question of gender in the debate, Mirabella remarked, “As a female MP I am concerned about women’s rights in this country”.535 She criticised Islam as being a belief system that “devalues and degrades women and who accepts a legal system that would relegate women back to the Dark Ages”, and concluded with, “That is my opinion of the hijab and it is shared by many Muslim women”.536 She offered no evidence for this claim. Mirabella’s language was inflammatory and uncompromising. She placed her attacks within the context of freedom of speech, stating that, “Women have fought too hard in this country to allow political correctness to silence any criticism of women-hating ideologies”.537 Bishop’s and Mirabella’s comments about the hijab, and their coverage by News Limited, once again drew negative attention to Muslim Australians during a time of heightened sensitivity.

In spite of good deal of support for Bishop’s and Mirabella’s comments in the Howard Government, there was not complete unanimity among Coalition members over how they viewed the issue of banning the hijab. On 30 August 2005 the federal Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, John Cobb, stated that Bronwyn Bishop’s comments were an insult to many Australians.538 Cobb commented that, “The government does not seek to impose cultural sameness on Australians…Do we ban nuns from wearing a habit?”539 Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson was another member of the Howard Government who publicly opposed a ban on head scarves in government schools, commenting that, “As far as the government is concerned, we defend the rights of all Australian children to be able to go to schools

535 ibid.
536 ibid.
537 ibid.
539 ibid.
which their parents think best”. Nelson further stated that it was the right of every Australian “to wear the symbols of their own religious conviction and affiliation, so long as they are consistent with broader school’s uniform policies”.

On 27 August 2005 under the headline “Bishop backs school headscarf ban”, The Australian reported Bronwyn Bishop’s comments supporting a ban on the hijab in schools. The article also referred to the comments made by Sophie Mirabella calling for a debate about Muslim schoolgirls wearing headscarves. However, the article balanced their views by concluding with a statement by Brendan Nelson that he did not feel that a ban on the wearing of the hijab or any other religious item was necessary in government schools.

My survey of statements made by prominent ministers in the Howard Government revealed that Health Minister Tony Abbott was particularly cautious in his remarks regarding Islamic cultural practices. Abbott’s careful language was demonstrated in a speech he delivered at the “Towards a Cohesive Australia forum” on 15 September, 2006. In this speech Abbott observed that the “government expects people to accept the principle of equal treatment for all and demands only that everyone resident in Australia obey Australian law”, and that he recognised that it was possible to be an “Australian and a Muslim” (i.e. rather than an Australian or a Muslim). Abbott concluded by saying that he was “confident that Australia can only benefit from intensive dialogue between Australian Muslims and people of other faiths”.

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541 ibid.
543 ibid.
545 ibid.
546 ibid.
547 ibid.
6.2.1 Political and Media representations of Hijab

In her study of Muslim women’s identity in Australia, Anne Aly describes how Muslim women have been positioned in the Australian media as being in opposition to the “values of liberal democracy and the feminist agenda”. Aly argues that in media representations, the mere act of wearing the hijab suggests that Muslim women were unable to participate in a democratic secular society.548

On 1 September 2006, in an article in The Australian, Richard Kerbaj reported John Howard’s call for Muslims to embrace “Australian values”. Howard was directly quoted as saying, “There’s a small section of the Islamic population which is unwilling to integrate and I have said generally all migrants...have to integrate.”549 The article made use of the term “Muslim” 15 times and “Islam/Islamic” 8 times. While Kerbaj most frequently used the terms in conjunction with “community” and “population”, they were also directly associated with “militant Islamic”, “Muslim radicalism”, “Muslims’ divided loyalties”, and “Muslim treatment of women”. The article also used the equally loaded terms “extreme”, “terrorism”, and “radicalisation”. Kerbaj returned to Bronwyn Bishop’s “call for traditional Muslim dress to be banned in schools” from the year before, and to Howard’s earlier call for Muslims to “fully integrate by treating women as equals”.550 These comments clearly positioned the wearing of the hijab in two negatively constructed ways: hijab as a form of female oppression and hijab as a symbol of Muslim anti-integration.

As a tangible and emblematic presence on the bodies of women, the hijab is open to vitriolic attack. The wearer is instantly identifiable, and as a result the majority of attacks against Muslims in Australia have been against women who wear the headscarf. What critics find problematic with the headscarf is its iconic symbolism, reading it as a reactionary emblem against the secularism of the West, and arguing that in wearing it women will “exacerbate religious and ethnic differences”.551 For critics of the Coalition, Bronwyn Bishop had concisely summed up the obviously

548 Dreher & Ho., p. 203.
550 ibid.
reactionary point of view shared by a not insignificant proportion of members of the Howard government when she argued that, “it [hijab] has become the icon, the symbol of the clash of cultures, and it runs much deeper than a piece of cloth”.\textsuperscript{552} Shakira Hussein commented late in 2005, in an on-line response to Bishop and Mirabella, that Muslim women were as offended and alienated by assertions that the hijab was somehow threatening, un-Australian and defiant, as by Sheik Hilali’s comments about women.\textsuperscript{553} For Hussein, this created a dichotomy in which she was “torn between wearing a headscarf in defiance of Bishop or a pair of tight jeans in defiance of Sheik Hilali”.\textsuperscript{554}

Howard was criticised for using Muslim women as a pretext to demonise and isolate the Muslim community, and it is certainly clear that the pejorative language used by members of the Howard Government in relation to the hijab contributed to pre-existing prejudices about Islam and Muslims. There are examples of print journalists attempting to counterbalance negative perceptions regarding the wearing of the hijab.

In \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} in April 2007, Miranda Devine criticised members of the Howard Government for their attitudes to Muslim women’s clothing, observing that it was not for the state to force emancipation onto women and that such bans had the potential to backfire on the very people they were designed to protect. Devine argued that, if anything, banning “hijabs and burkhas just subjects Muslim women to further subjugation, forcing them indoors, alienating them from wider society, causing resentment among their children and ensuring future disharmony”.\textsuperscript{555} Devine also reasoned that the popularity of the bans in Europe was “less about feminism and more about politicians trying to mollify a populace angered by the Islamisation of their countries due to immigration and a higher Muslim birthrate”.\textsuperscript{556}

In May 2007 \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}’s Deborah Snow and Louise Williams reported on how although the wearing the hijab is a personal decision for Muslim

\textsuperscript{552} Scott., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{553} Hussein.
\textsuperscript{554} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{556} Ibid.
Australian women, it is often influenced by the expectations and reactions of others. In their article, “Looking beyond the Veil”, Snow and Williams interviewed a number of Muslim women in Sydney who stated that when wearing the hijab they are conscious of feeling like a full-time ambassador for Islam whenever they are outside of their home.\textsuperscript{557} The women described how when they are in public wearing the hijab, they feel they have to “bend over backwards to please”.\textsuperscript{558} All of the interviewees said that they felt the burden of representation, knowing that their individual behaviour and attitude would be viewed as synonymous with the hijab and thus with Islam. One of the women commented that she felt that if someone dropped something she would have to pick it up, or even let other people go through the queue first when shopping. Snow and Williams concluded by reporting that all of the women they interviewed felt that they had to try extra hard for acceptance, to “prove that Muslims are very peaceful people”.\textsuperscript{559} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} reporters found that for many younger Muslim women in Sydney, taking up the hijab was not just a spiritual act but part of a personal effort to help counter negative perceptions of Islam. Shakira Hussein also observed that as a Muslim she felt that social pressures impacted on her freedom to express her own identity: “If you are not wearing hijab for fear of harassment on the street or problems at work, are you really making an autonomous choice?”\textsuperscript{560} Riaz Hassan raised a similar issue in observing that the burden faced by Muslim women in Australia is that they not only represent their gender within their religion, they also function as surrogate representatives of all women in Australia. In wearing the hijab they are effectively participating in a “patriarchal discourse, one which endorses the Sheik Hilali style degradation of unveiled women”, but if they choose not to where it, they are seen as not being good Muslim women by elements of their own communities.\textsuperscript{561}

\textsuperscript{558} ibid.
\textsuperscript{559} ibid.
\textsuperscript{560} D. Snow, “Symbol of Faith Rest on Their Shoulders”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 1 May 2007, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{561} Hassan in Akbarzadeh (ed.) p. 167.
Media coverage of political discourse about the hijab was frequently framed through reference to gender rights, and after the Hilali controversy in October 2006, increased tensions around sexual values apparently contributed to this. My research shows that there was a distinct increase in statements about the hijab or headscarf from members of the Howard Government between 2005 and 2006, as there was also in coverage in the sampled media in the same period. However, in 2006, 31 of the articles about either the hijab or headscarf were found also to be linked to Sheik Hilali’s comments in the Lakemba sermon.

It is important to note News Limited pieces were as likely to be critical of anti-hijab discourses as the Fairfax journalists discussed above. Immediately after Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella’s remarks, on 30 August 2005, the Herald Sun reported “Headscarf ban clothed in prejudice”, and on 31 August 2005, “Hysterical response to vital right”. Also on 31 August 2005 The Daily Telegraph ran, “I’ll ban hijab when Bishop bans bikinis” while on 4 September 2005 The Sunday Mail ran the headline, “When Prudence becomes Bigotry”. These headlines reflected the tone of the majority of the media in reporting the Bishop and Mirabella comments. Coverage in The Australian had already changed from the negatively positioned “Muslim veil descends on Iraqi women” on 27 May 2005 to “Bigotry stripped bare” on 6 August 2005, before Bishop’s remarks.

The prominence of female journalists reporting on political commentary about the hijab in News Limited newspapers is also significant. As with comments made by female politicians, this is perhaps explained by the fact that the wearing of the hijab was viewed from the perspective of gender and discursively positioned as a gendered issue. In The Australian on 6 September 2005 Patricia Karvelas reported the continuing controversy under the punning headline “MP unveils new attack on female headscarf”. This article, which restated Mirabella’s rationale for banning the hijab in

563 “Hysterical response to vital right”, Herald Sun, 31 August 2005.
schools, featured criticism from Labor of the MP’s comments. Karvelas further reported Mirabella’s warning about the rise of an “Islamic class” in Australia, the “radical Islamists”. 568 With the story still running relatively strongly three months later, in an article for The Australian on 17 November 2005 Jane Fraser commented on those “challenged by headgear”, asking, “When does wearing a headscarf actually become an act of defiance?” 569 Fraser observed that if you were Bronwyn Bishop then the answer would always be, “if you’re a school student”. 570 The overall tone of Fraser’s piece, as indicated by the headline, is particularly critical of Bishop’s viewpoint. As an ongoing story, both the hijab and the political comments about it remained a focus of media attention well past 2005. Bishop’s remarks were still making news two years after she first made them. As noted above, this can partly be attributed to Sheik Hilali’s sermon in October 2006 which placed the issue of gender and Islamic clothing again under political and media spotlight.

On 25 August 2007 in his article in The Weekend Australian, “Behind the hijab of a gender jihad”, Waleed Aly again examined Bronwyn Bishop’s desire to ban the hijab from schools, finding it to be an “especially provocative suggestion from a woman and a politician who, in other circumstances, is known to have a libertarian streak”. Here, however, “she was clearly coming from a place of hostility” Aly observes, quoting Bishop’s comments: “In an ideal society you don’t ban anything…But this has really been forced on us because what we’re really seeing in our country is a clash of cultures and, indeed, the headscarf is being used as a sort of iconic item of defiance [by] the sort of people who want to overturn our values.” Aly also refers to Bishop’s subsequent remarks on radio in which she claimed that “hijab-wearing women were ‘in a position of being a slave’ and ‘can’t deal with the choices that freedom offers’”. 571 Aly’s focused and incisive discussion demonstrates, among other things,

570 Ibid.
the highly gendered nature of the discourses being used, to the extent that Muslim women’s identities are erased altogether. He writes:

The Muslim woman, in her varying degrees of cover, has become a symbol; a battleground for a much broader polemic. She is not a person with interests, aspirations, struggles and feelings. She is a concept. Bishop was most explicit on this point.572

My survey reveals, then, that after the first two or three days of the controversy in relation to the hijab caused by Bishop’s and Mirabella’s comments in August 2005, as the story continued to run and the analysis became more comprehensive, the tone of the great majority of the sampled New Limited articles was increasingly critical of the political comments. The coverage was also focused to a considerable extent on gender, and this intensified after the Hilali sermon.

Nevertheless, a content analysis of terms in the sample of 182 newspaper articles in *The Australian* (93 articles), *The Daily Telegraph* (47 articles) and *Herald Sun* (42 articles) between 2005 and 2007 found that the language used in combination with hijab was negative. An example is the frequency of the use of the negative term “extreme” and its other parts of speech, “extremism” and “extremists”, which was significant (70). The term “prohibited”, especially when also used in conjunction “banning”, “law” and “require”, was used negatively 84 times across the sample. The term “values” (54) was also used most frequently when referencing the “alien” nature of Islamic dress codes to Australian society and was used usually in conjunction with the phrase “Australain values”. A search of newspaper articles in *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun* between 2005 and 2007 found that reference to Sheik Hilali’s sermon was also made, making direct reference to terms associated with his 2006 sermon such as “cat” (37), “clothing” and synonyms such as “veil”(12). The term “rights” was also used in direct linkage with “woman”, “women” or “female” (106), reinforcing the image of the hijab as an oppressive item of clothing. As expected “Muslim” (281) and “Islam” (112) were frequently associated with “hijab” in newspaper coverage of political commentary. The newspaper coverage also

572 ibid.
used “Islamist” (146), a term often used to suggest a context of political and religious dogmatism.573

The use of this type of language in media reporting of political commentary brought the debate about the hijab back into close association with a focus on gender and female rights. Through his comments Sheik Hilali was seen as representing the subjugating masculine Muslim voice, with media coverage of his remarks about appropriate female dress reinforcing Bishop’s and Mirabella’s contention that Islamic clothing such as the hijab is oppressive. The use of negative language by the media in articles dealing with the hijab perpetuated the three main narratives of the Howard Government about the garment: the hijab was an act of extremism; the hijab went against Australian values; and the hijab was oppressive to women.

There were a number of examples of news stories that could be classified as being positive in relation to Australian Muslims and did not feature the kinds of terms that could introduce negativity regardless of other content. Most of these are stories that contextualise the lives and daily experiences of Australian Muslims, thereby helping to break down the “Us” and “Them” divide. These could be referred to as “life” stories. By exploring the everyday lives of Muslim Australians “life” stories have the potential to make a significant contribution to overcoming religious and racial tension. They also contribute to counteracting ethnic stereotypes while reflecting the social, political and ideological diversity of Australian Muslims. Such stories were especially important in addressing gender role stereotypes regarding Muslim women and traditional forms of Islamic clothing.

However, these types of stories were limited. My analysis of reporting on the hijab (Figure 4) found that the most frequently used terms in News Limited coverage of the hijab in the period 2005-7 were negative, even when the overall tone of a story was critical of the views of certain government members and public figures.

As expected, given the topic, the terms “Muslim” (281) followed by “Islamist” (147) and “Islam” (112) were used the most frequently in news stories dealing with the hijab. The next four most frequently used terms – “rights” (106), “prohibited” (84), “extreme” (70) and “values” (54) were negative in tone. The term “cat” (37) was used in conjunction with Sheik Hilali’s comments and was also classified as negative in tone because each time it was quoted or referred to it introduced a particularly negative impression of how a Muslim cleric can view non-Muslim women, and so a negative idea about all Muslims.”

In order to gauge how frequently the sampled News Limited articles framed Muslim women’s dress in Australia in terms of oppression, a search was undertaken for the use of “oppress” and related terms (“oppressed”, “oppressive”, “oppression”) in stories relating to various forms of Muslim female dress such as hijab, burkha, niqab.
and chador (the chador being a full-body cloak which is open down the front\textsuperscript{574}). It was found that the words relating to oppression were used 31 times. This suggests that the clothing choices of Muslim women were often framed as an enactment of oppressive cultural expectations, rather than a matter of the autonomy of these women in framing their own public identity through their dress just as any other Australian woman does.

Language context searches revealed that “oppress” and its related terms occurred most commonly within a seven-word radius of “Muslim” and “women/female” (44 per cent of occurrences), thereby reinforcing a negative association. During this period (2005-7) the Australian media carried a number of news stories from overseas in which the terms “honour crimes/killing” became metonyms for “Islamic and anti-modern cultures”\textsuperscript{575}. Considering the ill-informed and negative tone of the language used by the members of the Howard Government in their statements dealing with Muslim traditional female dress codes, it was surprising to find that the term “misogyny” and its related terms were used relatively infrequently in the surveyed articles.

These results of content analysis suggest that negative political discourse had a negative impact on representations of Muslims and Islam in the News Limited newspapers, which would ultimately be detrimental to public perceptions of Muslim women, in particular, and Australian Muslim communities more widely. Unlike statements made by members of the Howard Government about either Sheik Hilali or Dr Haneef, negative comments made about hijab by certain government members directly or indirectly affected all members of the Muslim community, non-secular and secular, regardless of whether or not they wore the hijab. Because the hijab operates as a concept and symbol emblematic of Islam, negative representations of the hijab and its wearers were too easily seen as negative representations of Muslim women and thus, Muslims in Australia.

This research confirms that media coverage of political discourse helped to maintain negative representations of Muslims, even though press coverage was increasingly critical of the government’s management of the issues concerning the hijab. The overall tone of commentary in the News Limited papers was problematic in that their coverage frequently placed the hijab within the exotic orientalist tradition of the “other”, something which is alien to secular Western society. There were, however, articles that offered counterbalance. While overseas newspaper coverage still positioned the hijab within the context of “Muslim women’s rights” (particularly when dealing with the Islamic world), my analysis of the surveyed articles from 2005 and 2006 demonstrated that in Australia the newspapers were often critical of the comments made by members of the Howard Government such as Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella. On a number of occasions the sampled media called for a greater understanding of issues facing Muslim women in Australia. A study of the language used by the media in the period from 2001 to 2004 was found to be more negative but the discussion was usually not framed within the context of the Australian debate and focused more on overseas representations of the hijab. Out of the newspapers surveyed in Newstext, 78 per cent of the articles contained language which was critical of the Howard Government and advocated for the rights of Muslim women in choosing whether they adopt the veil or not. However, the framing of news stories dealing with the hijab as a question of “women’s rights” by constructing women who wear the hijab as oppressed victims of a patriarchal religion and its associated cultural practices, only served to reinforce negative stereotypes of Muslims.

The Howard Government’s often repeated commitment to “Australian values” revealed an aversion not only to the headscarf but to the cultural assumptions associated with its wearing. Muslim women were the central subjects of this discourse while being largely voiceless in news coverage, and for those who choose to wear the hijab, their clothing served to make them a clearly identifiable marginalised group.\footnote{Dreher & Ho, p. 228.} In the post-2001 environment, Muslim women were frequently positioned as outsiders, and the hijab, along with other Islamic cultural markers such as the full
black beard, the chador and the niqab, in both the media and political consciousness apparently functioned as markers of “inassimilable cultural difference”.  

Australian academic Binoy Kampmark wrote about the increased focus on the veiling of Muslim women in the period following 2001. Kampmark described this period as being one of objectified marginalisation, in which this “cultural, orientalist emphasis in Australia has similarly exaggerated the semiotic associations with the hijab and the chador with suggestions of terrorist infiltration and servitude”.  

Kampmark also noted how the construction of the discourse about the hijab was contradictorily juxtaposed, for the woman “wearing the headscarf was oppressed while simultaneously dangerous”.

6.3 Women’s Rights and Political Commentary

In her history of Liberal women politicians, Margaret Fitzherbert notes that during the Howard Government there were a handful of times when Liberal women consciously operated as a separate group, when they sought to influence change in policies particularly relevant to women. One example of this “handful of times” to which Fitzherbert refers, is the political debate over the wearing of the hijab and whether it should have been banned from being worn in Australian government schools.

My study of news articles revealed some variation in the evaluative tone of the commentary based around gender, with a higher proportion of female political commentary being represented in news stories about the hijab in News Limited newspapers. Language used in the headlines of 81 articles *The Australian* (Table 6) was examined to understand how the accompanying story was framed. These headlines were analysed to gauge the type of terms used, with the most commonly used terms listed and categorised as being either a *Primary* or *Secondary* frame.

577 ibid.
579 ibid.
Table 6: Primary and secondary media framing of themes associated with the hijab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Organisation</th>
<th>Primary Frame</th>
<th>Frequency of use – number of headlines</th>
<th>Secondary Frame</th>
<th>Frequency of use – number of headlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News Limited – The Australian</td>
<td>Female Rights</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Un-Australian</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of newspaper articles in The Australian.

The most frequently used frame was “female rights” while the second most frequently used frame was “un-Australian”. The language used in the secondary frame placed the hijab within a context that was “alien” to Australian societal values. It was found that 41 news stories dealing with the hijab most frequently framed the story within the issue of “female rights”; in other words, the story featured elements positioning the garment as an item of feminine subjugation. The Australian used this frame 18 times, while it used the “un-Australian” frame 21 times.

A total of 178 articles were sampled for this analysis of the hijab. Out of this number, 112 articles dealt with quotes by female members of the Howard Government. A search for articles dealing with comments made by male members of the Howard Government returned only 58 articles. All the comments made in Figure 5 (below) were categorised as being negative and dealt with the dominant framing theme that the hijab was “un-Australian”.

Figure 5 shows the frequency of News Limited newspaper coverage about the wearing of the hijab given to female members of the Howard Government between 2005 and 2007. When the data in Figure 5 was compared with that in Figure 6 (below) regarding coverage given to male Howard Government members on the same subject, it became very clear that there was a noticeable contrast between the proportion of media coverage given to female members of the Coalition compared to their male colleagues. Female members were greatly over-represented, even in relation to the Prime Minister.
Figure 5: Government political comments about the hijab divided into gender: female

Source: Content analysis of newspaper articles.
*Articles included all forms of commentary dealing with the hijab. Where articles included more than one politician these were attributed to each politician.

Figure 6: Political comments about the hijab divided into gender: male

Source: Content analysis of newspaper articles.
*Articles included all forms of commentary dealing with the hijab. Where articles included more than one politician these were attributed to each politician.
Analysis of the data samples revealed that there were significantly more reported comments from female members of the Howard Government (Figure 5) when compared with their male counterparts (Figure 6). John Howard (30 articles) dominated reported comments about the hijab made by male members of his government. It can be assumed that this was again primarily due to the fact that as Prime Minister he was frequently asked whether he supported the comments made by other members of his government. This suggests that almost all of Howard’s comments regarding the hijab were in response to questions rather than being self-generated, such as those made by Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella.

Unlike the results shown in Figure 5, not all the comments shown in the Figure 6 data were categorised as being negative. Statements made by Tony Abbott did not support any form of hijab “ban”, with the theme of Abbott’s comments in these 5 articles being tolerance. The comments made by Peter Costello (12 articles) and Alexander Downer (7 articles) however did follow the negative pattern of categorising the hijab as “un-Australian”.

One of the most common criticisms made by politicians and journalists when criticising the hijab and other items of Muslim female clothing was that they were visual representations of female oppression. This study found that on a number of occasions this criticism was linked to Shari’a law. Islamic law has often been viewed in the West as a practice dominated by – and therefore only of benefit to – males. 581 This assumption and the negative representations that flow from it have provided grounds for anti-Muslim perceptions and therefore women who choose to wear the hijab have often borne the brunt of prejudice in the form of public abuse and even physical attacks. 582 It is ironic that the at times well-intentioned but misguided critique of apparent oppression of Muslim women by Muslim men results in oppression of Muslim women by non-Muslim men and women.

582 ibid.
A search for dominant themes in political references to the hijab from August to October 2005 returned 269 articles containing the themes “Shari‘a/Islamic law”, “gender oppression” and “hijab”. These documents took the form of newspaper articles, media releases, both formal and informal interviews (such as doorstop interviews) and speeches made in federal parliament. Out of the 269, 58 were linked to comments about the hijab made by members of Howard Government.

Figure 7: Dominant themes in political references to the hijab 2005

Source: newspaper articles, media releases, both formal and informal interviews (such as doorstop interviews) and speeches made in federal parliament.

The majority of the 58 sampled documents referred to dealt with attitudes towards assimilation (87 per cent) which was a stronger driver of anti-hijab political discourse than concerns about gender oppression (77 per cent). Significantly, Shari‘a (79 per cent) also appeared slightly more frequently than concerns over gender oppression in the sampled data.

News Limited reporting on news stories relating to the hijab repeated the theme of Howard Government discourse regarding the rights of women. Table 8 provides a sampling of the tone of News Limited coverage between March 2005 and June 2006. The search of these archives used the terms “hijab”, “headscarf”, “Muslim women’s clothing”, “Shari‘a law” and “Islamic law”. I selected only those articles where any of the references to traditional clothing and either of the references to “Shari‘a law” were
associated. As it happened, the same articles each directly referred to oppression of women or implied it.

Table 7: Sampling of references to the hijab in connection with Shari'a Law in News Limited reporting March 2005–June 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23/03/2006</td>
<td>Shari’a law would harm Aussie Muslim women</td>
<td>Ida Lichter</td>
<td>The Australian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/03/2006</td>
<td>Shari’a and its atrocious treatment of women</td>
<td>Babette Francis</td>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/03/2006</td>
<td>The ‘forced’ wearing of the hijab under Shari’a is an example of Islam’s repression of women</td>
<td>Piers Akerman</td>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/04/2006</td>
<td>Shari’a law had been forced on women, usually under threat of death, to wear traditional Islamic clothing such as burkha and the hijab</td>
<td>Andrew Bolt</td>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The language used by Ida Lichter reflects the kind of conventional Western discourse that has been increasingly evident since 2001, describing how “non-Muslim women have benefited from progressive secular laws while Muslim women have been subject to increasingly restrictive Shari’a laws”.\(^{583}\) Lichter argues that Islamic clothing such as the hijab and burkha “may appear innocuous” but they are items of forced female oppression.\(^{584}\)

\(^{583}\) ibid.

6.4 Conclusion

There were two key findings in relation to how political comments about the hijab were reflected in the reporting of News Limited newspapers. These findings were:

- That the reporting reproduced an Orientalist vulnerable victim framework in which cultural codes associated with the wearing of the hijab are enforced by a male dominated interpretation of Islamic law.
- That the wearing of the hijab was taken as a signifier of “defiance” or “resistance”, that is, as a clear visual emblem of Muslim women’s unwillingness to conform to “Australian values”.

One of the two key critiques of hijab by conservative politicians was based in a notion of gendered oppression. Politicians did not, however, use the language of contemporary feminism in their critique. Instead the phrase most frequently used was “women’s rights”, a phrase which itself is very much a product of nineteenth century liberal feminist discourse.585 There was a pattern in the language used by politicians, with different strands of conservative politics evident in the Liberal Party’s response to the question of the hijab. Bronwyn Bishop, Mirabella and Costello were strongly critical of the wearing of the hijab, whereas Howard was more circumspect in the language that he used, as were Nelson and Abbott.

This study found that negative statements made by members of the Howard Government were featured in media coverage, although the early reporting in News Limited newspapers was generally “objective” in that they reported on the statements without offering comment. However, media coverage of political remarks did affect representations of Muslims in the context that, as an issue, the hijab was brought into public discussion by Howard Government MPs such as Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella, and thereby into media coverage. Unlike in the case of political statements about Sheik Hilali and Dr Haneef, the discussion of the hijab was predominantly

driven by female members of the Howard Government. Further, the debate frequently placed the issue of the wearing of the hijab within the context of women’s rights by associating it with the oppression of women and the subjugation of female identity by patriarchal Muslim men. This obviously positioned both Muslim men and Muslim women negatively, for different reasons but with the similar effects. The other political justification for critical comments about the hijab was that the wearing of traditional Muslim female clothing threatened the secular nature of Australian society.

The negative tone of all of the political comment, which mostly took the form of statements to parliament and media interviews, had a direct influence on representations of Muslims in Australia. These negative representations reinforced pre-existing anxieties towards Muslims while also maintaining negative stereotypes. My research found that media coverage did not counter these stereotypes with attempts at positive framing.

Women who choose to wear the hijab have often found their Australian identity questioned and so feel less connected to Australia because they feel rejected. The selective use of the language of “women’s rights” by both politicians and the media in discussing Islamic female clothing, and the resulting subjugated gender image of Muslim women, far from demonstrating a newfound popular concept of female identity in Australia, reflected a highly gendered, sexualised and ethnicised construction of Australian identity. The negative construction of Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab holds little positive value to the greater protection or promotion of women’s rights, or the rights of ethnic minority communities within Australia.

This is especially evident in media coverage of issues of cultural concern to the Muslim community. In the debate about the hijab in 2005-2007, journalists often revealed cultural ignorance about the Muslim communities of Australia and little familiarity with Islam, factors which contributed to problems when reporting on Muslim clothing, especially female items such as the hijab. This ignorance also contributed to a sense of public unease because media coverage, albeit mostly unintentionally, too often reinforced negative stereotypes of the hijab as a “divisive” garment, discursively transformed from an exotic Orientalist quaintness to an image
that perpetuated a concept of “Us” and “Them”. A society-wide issue, this ignorance was reflected in much of the sampled print media. Journalists do not work in a vacuum; they are shaped by their social environment and are open to a range of political and ideological influences, some of which are openly hostile towards Muslims and Islam, and others of which are simply ill-informed or under-informed about the issues with which they are dealing. In the News Limited papers’ representations of Muslims in the period 2004-2006, there tends to be an emphasis on stereotypes that cast Muslims and Islam in an unfavourable light, at times even when the journalist is actively arguing against stereotyping and bigotry. In this respect, the sampled News Limited newspapers demonstrated recurrent stereotyping and reporting of negative comments even as they criticised the political figures who stirred up the controversy.

In the whole period between 2001 and 2007, News Limited newspaper coverage proved to be problematic in reporting the hijab due to cultural misconceptions rather than any outright bias, unlike comments made by politicians during the same period. This study found that the overall coverage of the controversy surrounding the hijab in News Limited’s The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun and The Courier Mail was mostly balanced and accountable, covering the comments made by members of the Howard Government in a responsible manner without sensationalising any of the at times inflammatory language used by the politicians. However, political comments were at times reported without any contrasting viewpoints.

A refined analysis was conducted of the data for the years 2001 to 2007 using cross referenced/cross tabulated parameters. This analysis concluded that the majority of language used by certain members of the Howard Government – notably Peter Costello, Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella – could be described as negative, focusing on the cultural significance of hijab and how it is at odds with a secular Australian society. The surveyed newspaper articles did not consistently reflect this, and while the data primarily illustrated a limited understanding of certain Islamic religious and cultural practices, this study found that there was no evidence of any real continuing antagonism in the media representations analysed. The ill-informed nature of some of the media reporting was indicative of a general lack of cultural and
religious understanding rather than any hostility towards Muslims, a fact which was contrasted by the pejorative language used by certain members of the governing federal Coalition during this time period. When it occurred in conjunction with reporting on political commentary, newspaper coverage contained elements that were used in a context which could be construed as being negative. Nevertheless, for a proportion of the public the mere fact that the media reported negative political comments served to reinforce their existing prejudices towards Moslem communities because traditional forms of Islamic clothing such as the hijab were taken to be emblematic of those communities.

Political comments relied on sustained and direct links between female subjugation and Muslims and Islam, with the comments made by members of the Howard Government being predominantly negative in tone. This perception was reflected in Mirabella’s statement that, “prescriptive forms of Islam are an unfortunate metaphor for sexual inequality”. In spite of the adverse nature of comments made by a number of high profile members of the Coalition, this failed to ignite the kind of debate some very senior figures might have been happy to see, focused on community concerns regarding whether the wearing of the hijab was “un-Australian” and against this country’s “shared” values. The views of Islam and Muslims revealed by the politicians who agitated about the hijab, and the language that they used in doing so, were found to be consistent with discourses of the Coalition I analysed in the chapters examining Sheik Hilali and Dr Haneef. The attempt to address the question, “what is an Australian?” formed a significant part of the political and public discussion encouraged by John Howard and others after 2001. Even though Howard did not embroil himself in the debate about the hijab in ways that could be construed as anti-Islamic, it was clearly his preoccupations, such as “Australian values”, “border security”, “national identity” and “community cohesion”, that provided both the background to and the context for the debate about the hijab. Coalition members who were driving the controversy about the hijab made frequent reference in interviews and press releases to “Australian values” and so implied the incompatibility of Muslims and their beliefs with those values. The hijab was taken as a symbol of

586 ibid.
Muslims’ unwillingness to “integrate” into a “secular” Australian society – a society that still has Judeo-Christian beliefs at the core of its “national values” and cannot in fact be taken to be entirely “secular”.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine media representations of evolving Howard Government discourses about Muslims in Australia between 2001 and the federal election in 2007. The focus is on linguistic and textual rather than visual forms of representation. I used the content analysis to inquire into reporting in the Rupert Murdoch owned News Limited newspapers. The content analysis combined qualitative and quantitative techniques to examine representations of a range of Howard Government discourse about Muslims in the tabloid newspapers *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Herald Sun*, the former broadsheet turned tabloid in format and increasingly so content, and in the broadsheet, *The Australian*. *The Australian* was included as part of the analysis because it reflected both a national perspective on the related issues as well as offering a more in-depth analytical coverage of the issues. As such the national broadsheet can be assumed to be read by politicians, the affluent and educated more than the tabloid newspapers or *The Courier Mail*.

For the purpose of refining a potentially huge area of research, the main focus of this study is the discourses used by politicians who garnered a high level of Australian media coverage in relation to Muslims and Islam during three discrete controversies in the period 2001-2007: those concerning Sheik Hilali and Dr Mohamed Haneef, and Bronwyn Bishop’s call for the banning of the hijab in public schools (and the wider debate that followed it). During the period of research there were a number of other high-profile events that influenced representations of Muslims in Australia. Initially I included these in my research, however in the interests of managing the project effectively I decided not to retain them. This was a matter of scope and also of the extent to which the evidence could sustain an argument about the influence of political discourses on media representations. The key aspect of the three case studies I retained is that they did have a demonstrable effect on representation of Muslims and Muslim communities in Australia.

A further concern in relation to the choice of case studies was that the framework of this study, and its focus on Howard Government rhetoric, required that the case
studies resonate politically on a federal and not only local or state government level. For example, news stories such as those dealing with protests against the planned Islamic schools at Camden in south-west Sydney or Carrara on the Gold Coast were found to be generally based around local municipal council and community concerns rather than being the focus of larger federal debate.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that whereas previous studies focused primarily on the ways in which the media constructed representations of Australia’s Muslim community, this study focuses on how part of the media represented political discourse concerning Muslims in Australia. The extra level of analysis enables me to be on firmer ground in suggesting the potential impact of political and media discourses on Australia’s Muslim communities and on perceptions of those communities among other Australians.

### 7.1 Overview of Findings

The primary research question for this thesis was:

“In what ways did the Murdoch press represent Howard Government rhetoric about Muslims in Australia?”

The discourses of the Howard Government, as represented in News Limited newspapers, were found to be part of a wider community narrative that was predominantly negative toward Muslim Australians. Based on the articles examined from the sampled databases and archives, media representations of political discourse largely reflected a strand of public perception about Muslims that the Howard government itself encouraged in the period following 11 September 2001. Such discourses were marked by suggestions of “otherness” and invited a sense of distrust that all too easily became a simplistic conjunction of “Muslim” with “Arab” and “Islam”, as well as with “radical”, “fundamental” and thus, “terrorism”. Edward Said observed that traditional representations of Muslim culture and identity in the West were based on the concept of the “Orient” – an exotic, and alien, construct.  

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analysis also found that representations of Islamic cultural practices such as the wearing of the hijab were frequently based on “orientalist” stereotypes, and perpetuated a negative image of Muslims in Australia. As seen in the comments made by Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella, political rhetoric can reposition cultural emblems as “news stories” and thus “public controversies”. In a time of perceived crisis, such as after 11 September 2001, the impact of an active political leadership, and the way that it chooses to use discourse in undertaking its role, should not be underestimated. Government rhetoric, and the manner in which the media represents it, whether intentionally or inadvertently, can inflame public sentiment.

One of the most problematic areas identified by this research was the lack of understanding of Australian Muslim communities on the part of many politicians and journalists. Misconceptions about Islam perpetuated in the Australian media in the period following 9/11 had a detrimental effect in relation to national public opinion. In a number of instances, such as the “children overboard” scandal, certain casual assumptions by the media about how they chose to represent Muslims assisted the interests of the state – whether intentionally or unintentionally. \[588\] This study found that the arrival of the Tampa, and the Howard Government’s opportunistic handling of it with an election campaign in full swing, in combination with the media’s initial failure to question the government’s version of events, facilitated the extent to which an anti-Muslim undercurrent developed in Australia after 9/11. \[589\] For example, my survey of both of the Murdoch tabloids, the Herald Sun and The Daily Telegraph, showed that in 37 per cent of the articles dealing with the so-called “boat people” who were rescued by the Tampa, the words “terror” and “terrorism” were used in association with the mostly Muslim asylum seekers. \[590\]

The failure of most media to question government representations at this time only served to embolden the Howard Government to continue focusing on the subjects of race, religion and national security as vote-winning issues. However, it is also debateable whether the media would have been able to access and publish much in the

\[588\] Hafez, p. 57.
\[589\] Hartcher, p. 18.
way of factual details behind the Tampa incident. Michael O’Connor, former Executive Director of the Australian Defence Association (ADA), revealed that the military’s caution in dealing with information about the Tampa related to “preventing embarrassment to people in senior political and bureaucratic positions”, rather than to operational security.591

Another challenging area for journalists seeking to investigate news stories, such as the Tampa or the case against Dr Haneef, is the fact that the Australian constitutional framework is weaker than that in many other liberal Western democracies in relation to rights to gather, use and release information.592 Among Western democracies Australia is unusual in not having a Bill of Rights, nor does it have a national statutory Charter of Rights.593 Aside from the problems that are posed to investigative journalism by laws relating to freedom of information and defamation, journalists in Australia have to negotiate an apparent obsession with official secrecy that permeates all levels of government.594

This study has contributed to a growing field of research by examining how the media represents political discourse about religious minorities in Australia, and the reductive role that these representations can have. It is evident on the basis of my analysis that the Murdoch print media between 2001 and 2007 represented Muslims in negative ways by “reproducing stereotypes and misinforming readers of Islam as religion and culture”.595 The majority of the fear-based discourse on the part of politicians and reproduced in the press, was related either to international events in Islamic countries with no bearing on Australia, or actions arising from a minority within Australia, often motivated by ethnicity rather than religion.

591 Foster, p. 131.
595 Akbarzadeh & Smith, p. 8
Fear of terrorism created a political discourse that evolved to be aggressively jingoistic in nature. Jingoistic discourses that both encouraged and appealed to nationalistic sentiments relied on recurrent references to ill-defined but reassuring notions such as “national security”, “Australian values” and “national identity”. Given a climate of fear of terrorism, political discourses of this kind, widely represented in the press, clearly functioned as “dog whistling”, stirring up and continuously fuelling distrust of the Muslim/Islamic “other” as potential terrorist and/or zealot seeking to undermine “Australian values”. So effective are such discursive practices that even when government statements are repeated in journalistic contexts critiquing government, there is no certainty that a balanced critique will outweigh the negative effects of dog whistle triggers.

7.2 Limitations of the Research

While the overall scope of this study, when considered within the already established confines of print media analysis, has been quite comprehensive, its focus on texts published in English in the Murdoch press has meant that it is not representative of any discourses made in Arabic or other relevant languages (for example, Dr Haneef’s first language is Hindi). However, my focus on the dominant discourse meant that I needed to favour media outlets that tend to represent values and beliefs that are most prevalent in Australian society. There was no equivalent problem in relation to Dr Haneef since AFP interviews with him were in English. Nevertheless, given that this study is primarily concerned with reporting of political representations of Muslims in a particular segment of the Australian English language media, the intentions of the study have been achieved, a minor limitation notwithstanding.

This research was limited to the News Limited newspapers – The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun and The Courier Mail. This enabled me to capture a particular “stable” of media using the search mechanisms of that group. Further, these print sources could be systematically reviewed, enabling analysis to be undertaken in a reliable context. It followed, though, that I did not take account of other forms of media, notably radio and television. These limitations in media coverage mean that statements made by highly rating talkback announcers or widely consumed current affairs television programs have not been subject to depth analysis. Such sources
obviously have a substantial impact on public opinion, but it would have been much more difficult to establish a database for analysis and, given my methodology, analysing broadcast media would have expanded the scope of this study beyond feasible limits. Nevertheless, there is great potential for further research into other forms of media and their representations of Muslims in Australia. In focusing on a particular discursive field, I found that the language of “spin”, especially when issued by the Howard Government in the form of official media releases, had the potential to manipulate reporting.

The methodological approach of content analysis chosen for this study has proved to be sufficient in assaying the target of the research. The primary reason for selecting content analysis over other forms of analytical research was that by using qualitative and quantitative research techniques conjunctively, it offers the ability to discover and foreground data in a reliable and easily identifiable manner. This allowed me to investigate particular political and media discourses accurately and so produce a useful analysis of print media discourse in relation to coverage of Muslims in Australia.

7.3 Discussion of Findings

This research was focused on three major case studies within which analysis could be grouped. Each of the three dealt with a particular issue, event or controversy involving and/or impacting on Australian Muslims in the six years following the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001. They were: the former Mufti of Australia, Sheik Hilali, who was forced to step down following media and public outcry over a speech he gave in the capacity of Imam of Lakemba mosque in western Sydney; the arrest and detention of Dr Mohamed Haneef for apparent collusion in a (failed) act of terrorism carried out in Glasgow, UK; and controversy about the hijab, the traditional headscarf worn by many Muslim women, after Howard Government MP Bronwyn Bishop called for the garment to be banned in Australian schools. Although the controversy about the hijab occurred prior to the events involving Hilali and Haneef, it is dealt with after those case studies because it enables a range of insights into broader attitudinal matters that can help to contextualise the other two events.
Chapter Four examined Sheik Hilali’s Lakemba sermon of 2006, in which, in criticising Western women’s clothing as immodest, he implied that they invite rape. First reported on in English in *The Australian*, the sermon drew widespread criticism from both politicians and the media, and heated public backlash. Even though the sermon was given within the confined environment of the mosque, media reporting of the sermon gave the impression that Sheik Hilali was openly advocating a future direction for Australian society and not just speaking to/for his own congregation. Media coverage offered no contextualisation for the speech, and Sheik Hilali’s position as Grand Mufti of Australia meant that there was a ready correlation made between his comments and the wider Muslim community in Australia. While there is no question that the sheik’s comments were unacceptable whatever the context in which they were delivered, the highly charged and negative language used to him in political discourse was reflected in media coverage, with this language positioning the mufti as an ideological “threat” whose views were influential among Australian Muslims. However, is also important to note that since reporting of Sheik Hilali’s comments was driven by *The Australian*’s publication of the text of his sermon, media coverage of the mufti was likely to be negative regardless of political discourse. The coverage in the other sampled Murdoch newspapers was consistent with that of *The Australian*. The combined scope of political and media coverage meant that negative constructions affected Muslims not only in Western Sydney but all over Australia.

Chapter Five focused on the arrest and detention of Dr Mohamed Haneef in 2007. It became clear relatively quickly that the Howard Government’s case against Dr Haneef was not particularly robust, and this was reflected in the media’s inconsistent approach to the story. My analysis of reporting on Dr Haneef’s case in the Murdoch papers highlights that in the early stages the media were primarily concerned with straightforward law and order/security dimensions (the same dimensions that were of prime concern to the Howard Government). The media’s dependence on government sources for information meant that media coverage was consistent with the government’s position. During this time any human rights issues were largely overlooked, or at least, not remarked upon in the Murdoch press. However, over time the case gathered momentum and these broader themes began to feature more prominently in the reporting. Whereas initial coverage in News Limited newspapers
relied on information supplied by the Howard Government and thus supported the government’s version of events, as greater use was made of more independent, non-government sources, there was a discernible shift to focus on human rights and/or human interest. As the first month’s coverage progressed, news outlets increasingly adopted a questioning or critical tone in relation to the government.

The early focus on the law and order/security aspects of Dr Haneef’s detention and the media’s consequent representation of him as a terrorist – or at least a person who colluded with terrorists – reinforced the negative ways in which the federal government discussed Muslim communities in Australia. My research found little attempt in News Limited coverage to contextualise the arrest of Dr Haneef in relation to wider global terror issues. On the contrary, uncritical reproduction of political discourse fed into public unease about figures in the Muslim communities of Australia that had already been intensified after 9/11 and further intensified due to the controversy over Sheik Hilali’s comments. By the time the Murdoch Press became more circumspect about how they dealt with Dr Haneef’s case, the public perceptions were already in place: the damage was done to Dr Haneef’s reputation, to the widespread employment of overseas doctors in Australia and to acceptance of the nation’s migration and refugee resettlement programs.

Chapter Six examined News Limited newspapers’ coverage of political commentary about the hijab. Comments made by Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Mirabella in 2005 calling for the banning of the hijab in schools positioned the garment as both a symbol of female oppression and as a challenge to a secular Australia. As Howard Government MPs and as women, Bishop and Mirabella’s criticisms of the hijab were widely reported in News Limited newspapers. One of the key frameworks used by these politicians, and others, for their critique of hijab was gendered oppression. This political, journalistic and public perception of Islam as a religion that is oppressive for women was strengthened the following year by Sheik Hilali’s extremely provocative comments attacking “immodest” forms of female clothing (i.e. such as worn by ordinary young women in Australia).

The other key feature of political comments in the controversy impelled by Bronwyn Bishop’s call for the banning of the hijab in schools was a focus on whether wearing
the hijab is consistent with maintaining “an Australian identity”. Here there was a slide from the perception of Muslim women’s “oppression” to the idea that gender inequality is at odds with “Australian values”, and thus the dangerously divisive implication that Muslims practising traditional beliefs and customs could not be “real Australians”. It was then possible to represent Muslim women wearing customary garments as resistant subjects – that is, as people *unwilling* to “become Australians”. The terms of the discourse deployed by certain members of the Howard Government during the debate about the hijab not only foreshadowed but laid the groundwork for the discourses later used by the John Howard, Peter Costello and other senior ministers in the context of “dog whistling” in the lead up to the 2007 election, including the language discussed in the chapters focused on Sheik Hilali and Dr Haneef.

My analysis demonstrates that the patterns in political discourse during the debate 2005-6 debate about the hijab further entrenched public unease about Muslims that had become more common post-2001. Bishop’s and Mirabella’s comments, and political debate within the government both supporting them and critiquing them, were widely reported in News Limited newspapers. However, in this case reporting was, on the whole, relatively balanced, both in terms of representing all aspects of the political debate and in terms of journalistic opinion pieces.

Nevertheless, political and journalistic comment, even when well intentioned, had the effect of reinforcing pre-existing anxieties in relation to Muslims in Australia and preparing the ground for future controversies. The feminised nature of discussion about the hijab was significant. Political comments were driven more by women MPs both from the Howard Government and the opposition, and there was more media coverage and/or comment by female journalists. At the same time, as noted above, the hijab was represented as a symbol of the oppression of Muslim women whose lives were seen to be constrained by deeply patriarchal religious and cultural expectations. Some politicians and journalists attempted to contextualise Muslim women’s choices in relation to cultural traditions, but even when it set out to provide less simplistic representations, the dominant discourse in political debate and press coverage
nevertheless suggested that Muslim women are less “free” than other Australian women.

Thus, while I found News Limited coverage of political statements about the hijab to be relatively balanced, content analysis also showed that the articles nevertheless reflected an overall cultural ignorance, which doubtless only served to reinforce negative stereotypes of Australian Muslims.

7.3.1 Changing discursive relations

This study found that while there were clear patterns in the negative portrayal of Muslims in media coverage of political discourse in the period immediately following 9/11, the often-stereotyped nature of these representations was frequently challenged by the construction of later narratives. Obviously, the Murdoch newspapers I sampled reproduced political discourse simply by reporting it, thus circulating negative representations which doubtless affected public perceptions. This was the case early in the media life of each of the three major stories that constitute my case studies. However, in each case, journalistic discourses began to alter as the story developed more angles, with more sources of information available to journalists, and more journalists willing to problematise and critique government representations. After the second half of 2005, when the controversy erupted about Bishop’s call for the banning of the hijab in schools, the tone of press coverage of political comments about Muslims altered substantially. The Murdoch newspapers I sampled, The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, The Courier Mail and the Herald Sun, were more likely to carry articles in which the portrayal of Muslims aimed to confront the traditional stereotypes often perpetuated by biased and ill-informed comments from members of the Howard Government. This can be seen most obviously in an increased emphasis on the human interest aspects of stories, and the human rights perspective in the case of Dr Haneef and the wearing of the hijab. There is no question that this change reflects an increased effort to provide counterbalancing elements to the negativity of the media’s reporting of political comments.

However, given that the climate of fear and anxiety post-2001 was continually reinforced by the government’s own political discourses, changing media representations in order to produce more “balance” does not seem to have been
sufficient to increase public confidence in Muslim fellow citizens. I found that continued circulation of negatively constructed “truths”, regardless of whether they are produced by political discourse or media coverage, or both, can have a significant detrimental effect, undermining one section of the community and leaving it open to vilification and marginalisation. We need to be cognisant of connections between hostile political and media constructions, public perceptions, and feelings of inclusion and exclusion in the Australian community.

7.4 Implications of the Findings

This study’s findings have implications for how the media should represent discourse about any one section of the community as “objectively” as possible – or certainly with a conscious and reflexive awareness of balance. This is especially important when political discourses cannot be relied upon to exercise the same balance, or, indeed, when politicians actively encourage fear, anxiety and division in the community. Media coverage in such circumstances needs to be undertaken from a position of informed knowledge and avoid reliance on simplistic generalisations. Once a particular group has been positioned negatively by government, it becomes more difficult for a responsible press to counter those discourses, but all the more important for it to try to do so. The press cannot avoid reporting political discourses, even when those discourses are relying on negative representations that can easily be seen as “truths”. However, the press can question, problematise and critique such representations from the outset, thus inviting the public to do the same. My research reveals that the Murdoch press did begin to question, problematise and critique, but not for some years after 2001, and in each of the cases that are the focus of this study, it took varying amounts of time from the beginning of the story until media perspectives began to seek more balance. How soon media discourses began to depart from government discourses seems to have been a matter of how clear cut the case could be seen to be.

That is, in the Hilali controversy, given the extreme nature of the sheik’s remarks, there was little leeway for anything but a critical assessment of the sermon’s content from both the government and the media. This research found that one possible reason for the continuing negative tone of media coverage of political rhetoric in the period
following 2001 was that a mostly anti-Muslim discourse was simply a reflection of the tenor a great deal of public opinion at the time. Since the majority of people held negative views on Sheik Hilali it is not surprising that the media perpetuated Howard Government representations of Muslims in reporting on that case. In the Haneef situation, on the other hand, contrary information to the government position began to become available quite soon after Haneef’s detention and so the government’s rhetoric became open to journalistic critique. Clearly, with the 2005-6 debate about the hijab, Bronwyn Bishop’s and Sophie Mirabella’s position was extreme and went against a widespread Australian value of respecting the freedom of others. It was thus almost immediately problematised by other members of the government and by the press. Ironically, then, when the extremism was expressed by “us” rather than by the “other”, the discursive field became open to multiple interpretations from the beginning.

Scott Poynting explained the concept of the “radicalised frame” of public discourse where entire Muslim communities are stereotyped as dangerous, barbaric and disrespectful of Western laws. One method of dealing with negative and stereotyped representations of Muslims is to diversify the “radicalised frame” in media coverage of Muslim Australians. In the period after 9/11, as Muslim communities in Australia came under increasingly intense news media scrutiny, “positive stories” also began to appear about the everyday life of Australian Muslims. By utilising informative or educational reporting and feature articles, these stories effectively presented the “facts” about Muslims and Islam while problematising common stereotypes and misconceptions. In using background pieces to explore the diversity of Muslim communities within Australia, such stories have been able to highlight increasingly the complex nature of these communities and the diversity, contradictions and similarities within them. According to Cunningham and Turner, this has resulted in significant shifts in representations of Muslims in Australia. What is beginning to occur is a diversification of news coverage, which has moved beyond the

597 Ibid.
598 Cunningham & Turner, p. 282.
generalisations involved in a traditional focus on the “usual suspects” in the form of dominant themes of religious fundamentalism, ethnic crime and terrorist activities.\textsuperscript{599}

This study has highlighted the need for media sensitivity when reporting on political discourse during times of heightened public concern such as the period following 2001. I have concluded that if we are to ensure that no section of the Australian community is vilified on grounds of race, religion or ethnicity, we need to address the discourses that politicians use to inform public perceptions and thus shape the public idiom. Current discourses, such as Peter Dutton’s extraordinary comments about the alleged inability of Lebanese Muslims to integrate into Australian society, indicates that this concern continues to be justified.\textsuperscript{600} Adam Lockyer observes that the phraseology and terminology that the media adopt generally become the accepted way to express that idea in the public forum.\textsuperscript{601} This inevitably means that the language with which the media reports and represents insurgent terrorist organisations and their actions are extremely significant.\textsuperscript{602} So too is the language with which the media reports political comment on those and other events. In this context, once they are taken to be regularly present in media discourse, ideas that are often a reflection of a politician, journalist or commentator’s personal views and biases are too readily understood to be accurate representations of objective fact.\textsuperscript{603}

Throughout this thesis, and particularly in the literature review, I have emphasised how orientalist representations of Muslims are used to perpetuate outdated or unrealistic stereotypes. As Edward Said observed, using language that promotes a particular representation to reinforce negative images creates a social and cultural divide.\textsuperscript{604} The discourse of Orientalism positions Muslims as something both exotic and alien, and in so doing perpetuates an “us” and “them” dichotomy. This study found that a great deal of Howard Government rhetoric, as covered in print media

\textsuperscript{599} ibid.
\textsuperscript{600} D. Snow, “Peter Dutton’s remarks on Lebanese Muslims risk ‘creating terrorists of the future’”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 24 November 2016.
\textsuperscript{601} A. Lockyer, \textit{The Relationship Between Media and Terrorism}, ANU, Canberra, 18 August 2003, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{602} ibid.
\textsuperscript{604} Said, 2003, p. 11.
reporting, placed all Muslims into a shared position represented by discourse which was frequently negative. This erased the diversity and richness of Australian Muslim communities and took Muslim and Islam to be one and the same. Helen J. McLarena and Tejaswini Vishwanath Patil note that what is said also serves to silence what is left unsaid and render it unimportant in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{605} To a considerable extent, the manner in which the Murdoch print media represented political rhetoric between 2001 and 2007 inflamed already existing public prejudices against Muslims in Australia. However, in the later part of that period the same media demonstrated a capacity to approach the reporting of political comment in a more measured and critical way. If the dangerous consequences of a divided civil society are to be avoided, it must be a priority of politics and the media to ensure that their discourse does not collapse differences into stereotypes by failing to represent diversity within and between various parts of Australian society; unjustifiably target particular groups with negative representations; or aggravate prejudice.

Appendix A

Transcript of Sheik Hilali’s Sermon delivered at Lakemba Mosque
2006 (English Translation)

BELOVED brothers and sisters, we have spent this good and blessed night kneeling and prostrating, worshipping God, Lord of the Universe, through the prayer of al-Qiam, listening to the most truthful of words. And from the Sura of Al-Ma’ida (The Table), I stand before you to discuss this legal, criminal, legislative position through a Koranic judgment issued by the Supreme Koranic Court of Justice for the crime of theft.

In it, God put forward man before woman. God says, "The man thief and the woman thief, cut off the hands of both as a punishment, for that they have erred" - an example from God, for God is ... What should it be, God is forgiving, merciful, or mighty, wise? No, it has to be mighty, wise, not forgiving, merciful. Not at all. No way. For God is mighty, wise.

So, we look at the penal code in the Koran for the crime of adultery. In theft, the man was put forward before the woman. We come to the penal code in the Koran for the crime of adultery. God says, "The adulteress and the adulterer, you shall whip each of them a hundred lashes." So why is the man put forward before the woman for theft, and the woman put forward before the man. In the code of what? Adultery.

Dear beloved, God called the Koran the Al-Dhikr Al-Hakim. He called it the Al-Dhikr Al-Hakim. A book whose verses are wise, a book whose verses are detailed. And who is someone wise? The one who prescribes the right medicine for the right illness, we call him wise. And the one who says the right word at the right time, we call him wise. And the one who acts appropriately on issues, wise. All the verses of the wise Koran, at their beginnings and at their ends, there is a connection between
the body and the end. Between the context of the verse and its beginning, and then its closing, the end of the verse.

“Forgiven, merciful” has a meaning. “Mighty, wise” has a meaning. “Forgiving, patient” has a meaning. “Patient, forgiving” has a meaning. “Hearing, knowledgeable” has a meaning. Every verse, when it ends with the mention of one of the attributes of God, has a wisdom that is legislative, rhetoric, in the body of that verse.

This verse in particular, the verse in the Sura of Al-Ma’ida, when the Koran was revealed, and it used to get revealed to the Messenger of God, there were no recording devices to tape them. And they didn’t have then telephones that can take pictures and record. And at that time, there were no cassettes, and even 99 per cent of the people didn't know how to read or write. So they relied on memorising. On intuition. On their memories. One would hear the verse spoken by the Messenger of God, so he’d recite it and chant it in prayer until he memorised it. Very few knew how to write.

One Arab man heard this verse by the Messenger of God, and while he was in his field, his orchard, at his work – he’s a working man - he was reciting the verse: “The man thief and the woman thief, cut off the hands of both as a punishment, for that they have erred - an example from God.” But instead of saying “for God is mighty, wise”, he said “for God is forgiving, merciful”.

A nomad was passing by, he was a non-Muslim. The companion of the Prophet was reciting the verse, and the nomad was passing by. He heard the verse. Immediately, naturally, and with refined eloquence, he said that it was not right. Without hearing the full verse. So that nomad asked the companion of the Messenger of God what was he saying. He answered, “I am reciting something from the Koran”. But the nomad said, “Your Koran is in Arabic, but you have never had such linguistic fault. Recite it again.”

So the companion recited, “The man thief and the woman thief, cut off the hands of both as a punishment, for that they have erred - an example from God.” But instead of saying “for God is mighty, wise”, he said “for God is forgiving, merciful”. He (the nomad) said, “That is not right”. The man said, “You, a nomad, (inaudible). He
answered, “It’s not right. And I challenge you that it is not right. These words could never have been spoken by Mohammed son of Abdullah, the master eloquent. And they could never be words revealed unto him by God.”

He said, “Let’s go to the Prophet.” He then said, “Oh, Messenger of God, I have recited a verse but the nomad corrected it for me.” He said, “Yes, your companion says, for God is forgiving, merciful”. If God forgave and was merciful, He wouldn't command the ‘cutting off’. But He is mighty, wise, which is why He commanded the cutting off. The verse should end with “For he is mighty, wise”. The Prophet said to him, “The nomad has corrected your mistake with the eloquence and good style and beauty of the Arabic language.”

Yes, the nomad is right. “For God is mighty, wise”, not forgiving. “For God is forgiving, merciful”, that’s in another life where forgiveness and mercy is hoped for. But in a verse where there is “cutting off”, and where there is a limit imposed, God is mighty and wise, so He commanded the cutting off. But if He was forgiving and merciful, He wouldn’t have commanded the cutting off.

Also, in the same context, what we heard yesterday in the verse from Al-Ma’ida, in its end, what Jesus said. “And when God asked: Oh Jesus, son of Mary! Didn’t you say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside God?” He said, “Be glorified.” He did not even want to repeat the accusation. He didn’t want to repeat the same word. He said “Be glorified. It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then you knew it. You know what is in my mind and I do not know what is in your mind? You alone know what is hidden.”

We come to the end of the verse, “I only told them what You bade me. I said, ‘Serve God, my Lord and your Lord. I watched over them while living in their midst, and ever You took me to Yourself, You have been watching them. You are the witness to all things’. ” We come to the closing of the verse, “If You punish them, they surely are Your servants. And if You forgive them, surely You are forgiving, merciful?” Not at all.

Why wasn’t the verse ended with forgiveness and mercy? Because there is a crime of polytheism. God does not forgive polytheism, and forgives everything else. These
people said that God took a son, these people said that divinity united with man, and
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and they will see mercy? They will never see
it, not him or his father. Not dad or mum. No one will see mercy, of those who believe
in polytheism. Our Master Jesus knows that the crime is big. And there is no appeal
for it. No way the judgment can be appealed. And they will never have intercession
on the Day of Judgment, because polytheism is a great injustice. If it was a simple
matter, the verse would have ended with “For God is forgiving, merciful”. But it
ended with “If You punish them, they surely are Your servants. And if You forgive
them.” They’ll never see it. You will be wise, You will rule, then they’ll cop it.

Those who disbelieve amongst the people of the Book and the polytheists, where will
they go? Surfers Paradise? Gold Coast? Where? To the fire of hell. And not part-time,
they’ll be in it for eternity. What are these people? The most evil of God’s creation on
the face of earth. The issue is clear. So, the verse should be ended with what? “For
God is mighty, wise.” Not “For God is forgiving, merciful”. In regard to polytheism
with our Master Jesus, and in regard to the judgment on those who steal, rob and mess
am wondering, why didn’t the Koran say “The woman thief and man thief, cut off
their hands”? While there is “The adulteress and the adulterer, whip them”. Why
didn’t He say, “The adulterer and the adulteress”? It’s because they are wise words.
The reason for putting the man ahead of the woman in the issue of stealing is because
it is the wisdom. This is reality. This is the truth.

On the issue of stealing, when the man is responsible for earning. He’s responsible for
the expenses, for the food and water. He is the one who has to pay the rent, he is
responsible for the alimony, he is responsible for feeding his children. Maybe
circumstances forced him and Satan tempted him, and there is a woman like hell
behind him; she never has enough. She wants to change the furniture, change the
lounge every year. And behind every man who is a thief, a greedy woman. She is
pushing him. Not our women in Australia, the women of Canada. The hall up there is
full. They are the women of Canada and Mexico, the ones who encourage their men -
to do what? Go! Get me! And no matter how much he brings her, she wants more.
She wants to change the car, and change ... Of course, the woman keeps demanding
from her husband more than his ability. Either she will tell him to go and deal in
drugs, or to go and steal. What’s more than that? Spend as much as you have! You
know your husband, upside down! If you demand from your husband more than his
ability, then what does that mean? Who is the one who would have to become a
mafia? A gangster? And steal cars? And smash banks? And deal in the “blue disease”
(drugs)? Who is the one who commits these crimes of stealing? Who? The man or the
woman? It’s the man. That’s why the man was mentioned before the woman when it
comes to theft, because his responsibility is to be the provider. “The male thief and
the female thief, cut off their ...”

But in the event of adultery, the responsibility falls 90 per cent of the time with
women. Why? Because the woman possesses the weapon of seduction. She is the one
who takes her clothes off, cuts them short, acts flirtatious, puts on make-up and
powder, and goes on the streets dallying. She is the one wearing a short dress, lifting
it up, lowering it down, then a look, then a smile, then a word, then a greeting, then a
chat, then a date, then a meeting, then a crime, then Long Bay Jail, then comes a
merciless judge who gives you 65 years.

But the whole disaster, who started it? The Al-Rafihi scholar says in one of his
literary works, he says: If I come across a crime of rape - kidnap and violation of
honour - I would discipline the man and teach him a lesson in morals, and I would
order the woman be arrested and jailed for life.

Why, Rafihi? He says, because if she hadn’t left the meat uncovered, the cat wouldn’t
have snatched it. If you take a kilo of meat, and you don’t put it in the fridge, or in the
pot, or in the kitchen, but you put it on a plate and placed it outside in the yard. Then
you have a fight with the neighbour because his cats ate the meat. Then (inaudible).
Right or not?

If one puts uncovered meat out in the street, or on the footpath, or in the garden, or in
the park, or in the backyard without a cover, then the cats come and eat it, is it the
fault of the cat or the uncovered meat? The uncovered meat is the problem! If it was
covered the cat wouldn’t have. It would have circled around it and circled around it,
then given up and gone.
If she was in her room, in her house, wearing her hijab, being chaste, the disasters wouldn’t have happened. The woman possesses the weapon of seduction and temptation. That’s why Satan says about the woman, "You are half a soldier. You are my messenger to achieve my needs. You are the last weapon I would use to smash the head of the finest of men. There are a few men that I use a lot of things with, but they never heed me. But you? Oh, you are my best weapon."

Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali has accused the media of misrepresenting his Ramadan sermon at Sydney’s Lakemba mosque.606

APPENDIX B

Explanatory Statement by the Grand Mufti El-Hilali Regarding the Recent Media Campaign. 607

Explanatory Statement by the Mufti El-Hilali
Regarding the Recent Media Campaign

I would like to outline clearly and plainly some of the facts and basics that formulate my faith, belief and my understanding of the teachings of the true religion of Islam:

1- The crime of rape against any woman is an abominable crime; it has no justification, and the perpetrator deserves the severest punishment and would not deserve to belong to a religion or to humanity.

2- Women in Australia or any other western society are free to wear what they like, and no Muslim has the right to dictate the rulings of his religion on others. While non-Muslim women can cover or reveal whatever they choose of their bodies, Islamic Shari'a made it incumbent upon Muslim men to lower their gaze. It is prohibited for them to stare at the beauty of strange women.

3- It is my duty as a religious leader to advise Muslim women to adhere to and abide by the Islamic dress code. Having said that, Muslim women are free to comply with or reject my advice, and their reckoning will be with Allah the Almighty.

4- By saying the “exposed meat” displayed in a degrading way is a simile for a woman, making herself subject to abuse by men with diseased souls whose animalistic instincts will overcome them whereby they would abandon their humanity, mind and religion. These men are responsible for their crime.

5- The metaphor I used of the “exposed meat” was not appropriate for the western mentality. It has been quoted and misinterpreted by some groups with ill intentions. This metaphor was used in a private lesson given inside the mosque after the Taraweeh (optional night) prayers on the fourth day of Ramadan. It was meant for the Muslim attendees at the mosque and not the general public and particularly not the general women of our Australian society.

Apart from the above-mentioned facts, I would like to make it known to all my brothers and sisters in and out of Australia that:

After the Taraweeh (optional night) prayers on 27/09/2006, at the Lakemba Mosque in Sydney, Australia, I gave a lesson to the members of the Islamic community of Australia, the title of which was: “Why did Allah, the Almighty, mention ‘man’ before ‘woman’ in the crime of theft? as is quoted in the Quran: {As for] the thief, the male and the female, ...} [Al-Ma’idaah 5.38] while He mentioned ‘woman’ before ‘man’ in the crime of adultery? as is quoted in the Quran: {The woman and the man found guilty of adultery or fornication, ...} [An-Nur 24.2].”

This lesson lasted approximately 15 minutes; 10 minutes of these were spent on explaining the meaning of the first verse, and the remaining time was spent on giving advice and guidance relating to the way a woman dresses and the methods of seduction and the beauty given to her by the Almighty Allah. I emphasised that exceeding the limits in this regard is dangerous to both men and women; and that the devil exploits these charms of seduction to tempt both men and women to commit adultery and fornication. In this case, both men and women are committing a sin. So the topic did not deal with the crime of rape.
At the end of the lesson when I was explaining the reason why ‘woman’ was mentioned before ‘man’ in the verse dealing with the crime of adultery, I said it was because she possessed the charm, the methods of seduction and all similar devices given to her by Allah to tempt the man. For that I borrowed a metaphor used by an author called Ar-Rifa’i. He said exposing the meat in an illicit way would encourage the cats to devour it. I didn’t mean by that to humiliate the immodest women; I meant to censure the person who would abandon his humanity and turn into a vicious animal; and there’s a big difference between a cat’s behaviour and that of a human’s, as the latter is commanded and responsible for their actions.

I confess that this analogy is inappropriate and unacceptable for the Australian society and the western society in general.

I am deeply saddened and distressed by the acts of some devious groups which lurk in the dark watching me, and who cannot tolerate the moderate balanced way which I adopt to advocate for women’s issues, national harmony and co-existence, and to hold fast to the love of our Australian home, to protect it from all forms of extreme thoughts and to reject all acts of violence and any act that breaches the rule of law.

Yes, I feel deeply saddened that such an ordinary lesson has been used to slander and defame me after it had been translated with the ill intention of a dubious media that wishes to incite and they present an unfair campaign, the aims of which are very well known.

Once again, I turn to all the women of Australia and the world. You are the shining lights of the world, you are more than half of the society, and you are the daughters, the sisters, the mothers and the aunts. How could any sane person think of humiliating you?

You are the cherished pearls, the dearest thing in the world. So don’t be taken as offerings at the temples of the merchants of pleasure, or advocates of decadence and corruption.

Each one of us is responsible for accounting for his or her own actions before he or she is asked about them by the almighty Allah (on the Day of Judgment). Once again I am very sorry and apologize for what resulted from an unintentional analogy.

With all my respect to the women of the world.

In due course I will take the necessary decision that shall lift the pressures that have been placed on our Australian Muslim community and that which will benefit all Australians.

The pressure of the last couple of days has had an obvious effect on my health and well-being. I ask the public to give my family and I some privacy, time and space to recover. I have also asked for indefinite leave from my duties at Lakemba mosque.

Sincerely

Sheikh Taj El-Deen El-Hilali
Mufti Of Australia
APPENDIX C

Pamphlet distributed in the seat of Lindsey during 2007 federal election campaign\textsuperscript{608}

The Islamic Australia Federation

The role of the Islamic Australia Federation is to support Islamic Australians by providing a strong network within Islamic Australia. Muslims supporting Muslims within the community and assisting and showing Christian Australians the glorious path to Islam.

In the upcoming Federal election we strongly support the ALP as our preferred party to govern this country and urge all other Muslims to do the same.

The leading role of the ALP in supporting our faith at both State and Local government levels has been exceptional and we look forward to further support when Kevin Rudd leads this country.

We gratefully acknowledge Labor's support to forgive our Muslim brothers who have been unjustly sentenced to death for the Bali bombings.

**Labor supports** our new Mosque construction and we hope, with the support and funding by Local and State governments, to open our new Mosque in St Marys soon.

Labor was the only political party to support the entry to this country of our Grand Mufti Reverend Sheik al-Hilliyy and we thank Hon. Paul Keating for over-turning the objections of ASIO to allow our Grand Mufti to enter this country.

Ala Akba
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