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# The Importance of Family: The Key to Understanding the Evolution of Jihadism in Australia<sup>1</sup>

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This article investigates one of the key drivers behind the presence of jihadism in Australia, the influence of family. While no single factor can completely account for an individual's radicalisation, the following will contend that the influence of family (as well as other close social relationships) has been critical to the recruitment and retention of many members of the Australian jihadist network. The specific nature of this influence is demonstrated through case studies into the radicalisation of several significant members of the Australian network. Prominent examples of familial influence on radicalisation in other comparable Western countries have also been included to demonstrate a similar phenomenon within other international jihadist networks. However, the influence of family has at times proven critical in preventing radicalisation, and examples of this occurrence have also been included in the discussion. Overall, the article aims to contribute towards a better understanding of jihadist radicalisation in Australia by highlighting and analysing a key driver of the phenomenon.

Radicalisation and violent extremism has presented a small but persistent security challenge within many Muslim communities in the West. Though affected to a lesser extent than many countries, Australia has not remained immune from this issue. The following analysis aims to contribute towards a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon of jihadism within an Australian context. The Australian jihadist network is a complex interlinking of close relationships which transcend operational cells. This work will argue that the influence of family and other close social relationships has played a significant role in the passing of ideology and the recruitment and retention of jihadists into the network. Indeed, the networks structure and membership has evolved to reflect the strong family and close friendship relations which permeate it. The following study will begin by looking at the history of jihadist terrorism in Australia before analysing how individuals in that country have radicalised. The main body of the work contains case studies which highlight the considerable influence these close relationships have had on the decision-making process of individuals surrounding the network. However, the impact of such connections is not inherently negative as there are also instances of family members persuading individuals away from extremism. Case studies of this phenomenon are likewise explored

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before concluding with a look at the implications of these findings for counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism policy in Australia.

## Jihadism in Australia

Jihadism has presented a significant security challenge throughout the Western world for longer than a decade. In the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada Muslim diaspora communities have been sites of radicalisation towards political violence. Indeed, one study revealed that more than eighty per cent of known jihadists “currently live in diaspora communities”.<sup>2</sup> The threat faced by Australia from jihadist-related activity has been small when contrasted against other broadly comparable countries. This is illustrated by the fact that only thirty-three individuals have been prosecuted under terrorism laws, compared with hundreds in broadly comparable countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and France.<sup>3</sup> However, while comparably small in number, the threat to Australia from various manifestations of jihadism has remained persistent since the turn of the century.

Early terrorism plots in Australia were funded and directed by international terrorist organisations. The first occurred in 2000 when prominent Jemaah Islamiyah and al Qaeda figures plotted to attack Israeli and Jewish targets during the Sydney Olympics.<sup>4</sup> In 2003 a cell was also uncovered in Sydney which was planning to attack the Sydney electricity grid.<sup>5</sup> The actions of the cell were directed from Pakistan by the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commander responsible for the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, India.<sup>6</sup> After 2003 Australia's domestic jihadist plots shifted from being externally-guided to entirely self-starting. This shift, which was not consistent with comparable countries internationally, was predominantly due to the removal of key facilitators from the Australian community.<sup>7</sup>

This shift initially manifested in two self-starting jihadist cells uncovered in November 2005 in what was to become Australia's largest terrorism investigation (codenamed Operation Pendennis).<sup>8</sup> A cell of Melbourne based men was also arrested in Operation Neath in 2009 while planning a

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<sup>2</sup> Scott Atran, 'The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2006), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Zammit, 'Who Becomes a Jihadist in Australia? A Comparative Analysis', *ARC Linkage Project on Radicalisation 2010 Conference* (2011).

<sup>4</sup> Sam Mullins, 'Islamist Terrorism and Australia: An Empirical Examination of the “Home-Grown” Threat', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>5</sup> Stuart Koschade, 'The Internal Dynamics of Terrorist Cells: A Social Network Analysis of Terrorist Cells in an Australian Context', PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2007, pp. 222–47.

<sup>6</sup> Sebastian Rotella, 'The Man Behind Mumbai', *ProPublica*, November 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Zammit, 'Explaining a Turning Point in Australian Jihadism', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 36, no. 9 (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Shandon Harris-Hogan, 'Anatomy of a Terrorist Cell: A Study of the Network Uncovered in Sydney in 2005', *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, vol. 5 (2013).

suicide attack on Holsworthy Army Barracks in Sydney<sup>9</sup> and a further series of raids, conducted in Melbourne in 2012, resulted in another individual being charged with a number of terrorism related offences.<sup>10</sup> The following analysis will consider one of the potentially key reasons that the Australian jihadist network has been able to regenerate and adapt over time.

Moreover, clusters of aspiring Australian jihadists (numbering somewhere between three and fifteen in each instance) have sought training or combat overseas, chiefly in Afghanistan and Pakistan between 1999 and 2003, and Somalia or Yemen from 2006 onwards.<sup>11</sup> There have also been several significant instances of Australians involved with jihadist activity in Lebanon throughout the past decade.<sup>12</sup> More recently, approximately 100 individuals are believed to have travelled from Australia to participate in the conflict in Syria (many of which are believed to be fighting with extremist elements such as Jabhat al-Nusra or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant [ISIL]), and nine individuals have already been killed (potentially including Australia's first suicide bomber).<sup>13</sup> This explosion in the number of Australian foreign fighters has meant that the scale of the potential threat to Australia from jihadism is now larger as it has ever been.

## **Radicalisation in Australia**

Michel Wieviorka notes that the perception or reality of discrimination and or social exclusion, inevitably leads to "reactive assertions of identity" antagonistic to the host society.<sup>14</sup> Many Western countries have experienced such reactions manifest in acts of terrorism motivated by jihadist ideology. Fortunately the overwhelming majority of Australian Muslims, even those who perceive that society excludes them from full participation, do not join militant groups to act out their disaffection.<sup>15</sup> This is largely due to policies of multiculturalism and other related government, police and community programs which have been successful at building

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Zammit, 'The Holsworthy Barracks Plot: A Case Study of an al-Shabab Support Network in Australia', *CTC Sentinel*, June 2012.

<sup>10</sup> *DPP (Cth) v Karabegovic* VSCA 380 (17 December 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Shandon Harris-Hogan, 'Australian Neojihadist Terrorism: Mapping the Network and Cell Analysis using Wiretap Evidence', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 35 (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Shandon Harris-Hogan and Andrew Zammit, 'The Unseen Terrorist Connection: Exploring jihadist links between Lebanon and Australia', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 26 (2014).

<sup>13</sup> See David Irvine, 'Director-General Speech: Address to the Security in Government Conference 2013—Australia's Current Security and Intelligence Operating Environment', Canberra, Australia, 13 August 2013, <<http://www.asio.gov.au/Publications/Speeches-and-Statements/Speeches-and-Statements/DGs-Speech-August-13-2013.html>>; and Jared Owens, 'Recruit to Syria "killed" in War', *The Australian*, 18 January 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Wieviorka, 'The Making of Differences', *International Sociology*, vol. 19 (2004), p. 284.

<sup>15</sup> Rachel Woodlock, 'Being an Aussie Mossie: Muslim and Australian Identity among Australian Born Muslims', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 22 (2011), p. 403.

social cohesion.<sup>16</sup> However, this has not prevented a small violent extremist element emerging in Australia.<sup>17</sup> In order to understand the presence of this element, it is necessary to explore the motivations of, and influences upon, individuals who have become involved with jihadism in Australia.

Those who become involved in jihadism outside of conflict zones undergo a process of radicalisation. Unfortunately, there is no agreed definition of what constitutes radicalisation. Indeed, definitional issues are the “principal source of many controversies and misunderstandings” that surround the topic.<sup>18</sup> As this article specifically focuses on radicalisation in an Australian context, it will employ the definition of radicalisation used in Australia’s sole government funded national training course on the topic. The training manual states that radicalisation is:

a process in which individuals develop, adopt and embrace political attitudes and modes of behaviour which diverge substantially from those of any or all of the established and legitimate political, social, economic, cultural, and religious values, attitudes, institutions and behaviours which exist in a given society.<sup>19</sup>

Ultimately, radicalisation becomes of concern to authorities only if individuals or groups begin to endorse, promote, and/or prepare to use illegal and/or violent methods to achieve their political goals. In its most extreme manifestation this can result in an act of terrorism. While debates have thus far failed to arrive at a universally accepted definition of what constitutes terrorism,<sup>20</sup> this work will employ the definition as stated in the *Australian Criminal Code Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2003*.<sup>21</sup> Given that this article examines the actions of people who have been identified by the Australian authorities as being involved in terrorist related activities; it is an appropriate working definition.

John Horgan and Max Taylor contend that terrorism is essentially a group activity that derives much of its energy from the existence of a community of support, and that the vast majority of people reach out in search of social ties and develop relationships with like-minded individuals before committing

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<sup>16</sup> See Hussein Tahiri and Michelle Grossman, ‘Community and Radicalisation: An examination of perceptions, ideas, beliefs and solutions throughout Australia’, Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit, Victoria Police, September 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Louise Porter and Mark Kebbell, ‘Radicalisation in Australia: Examining Australia’s Convicted Terrorists’, *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, vol.12 (2010).

<sup>18</sup> Peter R. Neumann, ‘The Trouble with Radicalisation’, *International Affairs*, vol. 89 (2013), p. 874.

<sup>19</sup> Australian Multicultural Foundation, ‘Community Awareness Training Manual: Building Resilience in the Community’, Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit, Victoria Police, 2013. p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Kennedy, ‘Is One Person’s Terrorist Another’s Freedom Fighter? Western and Islamic Approaches to “Just War” Compared’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 1 (1999), pp. 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Australian Government Criminal Code Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2003, <<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2004A01125/Html/Text#param1>> [Accessed 1 January 2011].

violent action.<sup>22</sup> In the Australian context, rather than isolated plots containing islands of remote non-communicating individuals there is a large interconnected network of jihadists transcending operational cells.<sup>23</sup> Each jihadist plot that has materialised in Australia has had strong social links to previous operational cells.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, individuals who have participated in the Australian network frequently had pre-existing ties with members already inside the network and it was often a key condition for their joining. This finding is consistent with Marc Sageman's sample of global jihadist terrorists which found that two-thirds of the sample already had some connection to the network before joining.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, even allowing for the influence of previously held ideas, beliefs and grievances, many individuals initially become involved with armed struggles of all ideological persuasions for largely personal or social reasons.<sup>26</sup> This phenomenon has been seen in groups including ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom), the Irish Republican Army, the Italian Communist Party, the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades, Turkish terrorist organisations and the Weather Underground.<sup>27</sup>

Though commitment to an ideology is a necessary component of those who go on to commit an act of terrorism, 'extremist' views are held by a far greater portion of the population than the minute percentage who ultimately commit violence. The requirement of intimate social linkages to individuals already engaged in the movement contributes towards explaining the variance between the large number of socially isolated individuals with political grievances, and the small number of individuals who engage in terrorist activity. A study of more than 500 Guantanamo Bay detainees found that knowing an al Qaeda member was a significantly better predictor of those who may conduct terrorist violence than belief in a particular ideology.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, it has been noted that jihadist activity in diaspora communities is now largely executed "by self-forming cells of friends".<sup>29</sup> This finding would help to explain why to date there is very little evidence of individuals isolated from extremist networks in Australia becoming involved in jihadist violence.

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<sup>22</sup> John Horgan and Max Taylor, 'A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 18 (2006).

<sup>23</sup> Shandon Harris-Hogan, 'The Australian Neojihadist Network: Origins, Evolution and Structure', *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2012), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> The obvious exception to this is the first group of jihadists to operate on Australian soil. In this instance Jemaah Islamiyah was sending operatives to Australia to fundraise and recruit from within the Australian Muslim community.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 66-7.

<sup>26</sup> Tore Bjorgo, 'Introduction', in Tore Bjorgo (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Realities, and Ways Forward* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Max Abrahms, 'What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy', *International Security*, vol. 4 (2008), p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Atran, 'The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism', p. 135.

The prevalence of friends, lovers and relatives among those recruited to terrorism has made personal relationships an important part of recent theorising about radicalisation.<sup>30</sup> Scott Atran notes that around twenty per cent of the terrorist networks he studied were made up of individuals who are directly related to each other while seventy per cent were friends.<sup>31</sup> Similar findings were discovered in a study by the Saudi Ministry of the Interior which found that “nearly two-thirds of those in the sample say they joined Jihad through friends and about a quarter through family”.<sup>32</sup> In the case of Australia, the biggest revelation to come from detailed examination of the connections within the jihadist network is that individuals have been far more susceptible to involvement as a result of the influence of close friendship and family influences than any other form of recruitment. This would appear a logical practice as such close relationships would ensure loyalty and a degree of trust, and would assist a network in remaining both covert and connected.

Normative support provided by families plays a significant role in sustaining violence.<sup>33</sup> Family relationships in particular have been a significant factor in sustaining the jihadist phenomenon in Australia. Within the network there are clear examples of ideology being passed from father to son, mother to daughter, uncle to nephew and between brothers, cousins and spouses. Moreover, the presence of several prominent facilitators has ensured that just six families have made up as much as one quarter of the entire Australian jihadist network.

However, the influence of familial relationships has also been used to mediate extreme thinking and behaviour. There have been several noteworthy examples of close family members providing a mitigating influence and guiding individuals away from the network. Additionally, family responsibility has also limited the involvement of several individuals who possessed a desire to participate in operational cells but were unable to commit sufficient time and energy.

It has been noted that there is currently a dearth of academic research and primary source analysis concerning the prevalence of radicalisation in Australia.<sup>34</sup> The following analysis of the roles played by families within the

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<sup>30</sup> Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalisation Happens to Them and Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Atran, 'The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism', p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> Scott Atran, 'Who Becomes a Terrorist Today?', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 5 (2008), p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Michael King, Haula Noor and Donald M. Taylor, 'Normative Support for Terrorism: The Attitudes and Beliefs of Immediate Relatives of Jema'ah Islamiyah Members', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 34 (2011), p. 412.

<sup>34</sup> See Minerva Nasser-Eddine, Bridget Garnham, Katerina Agostino and Gilbert Caluya, 'Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review', Counter Terrorism and Security Technology Centre, Defence Science and Technology Organisation, March 2011, p. 3; or Riyad Hosain Rahimullah, Stephen Larmar and Mohamad Abdalla, 'Radicalization and Terrorism:

jihadist community (both negative and positive), will contribute towards filling this void. For individuals who have been arrested in Australia information has been drawn primarily from the court documents and telephone intercept (TI) and listening device (LD) transcripts of Australian terrorism investigations. Though material drawn from these transcripts may now be somewhat dated and represents only a fraction of the material collected, it is nonetheless a valuable resource. This is because the sharing of such information for analysis outside of law enforcement circles is extremely rare.<sup>35</sup> According to former CIA analyst Marc Sageman, research based on TI and LD material would go a long way in helping terrorism studies scholars and counter-terrorism professionals enhance their understanding of terrorist organisation and motivations, and provide them with better insights into what they were thinking and planning in real time while they were under surveillance. He noted “these conversations, captured without the knowledge of the perpetrators, are invaluable because they provide a window into the terrorists’ minds and everyday behaviour unadorned with after-the-fact rationalizations”.<sup>36</sup> However, this study has been somewhat restricted by the less reliable information available regarding Australians accused of jihadist activity overseas. Such material, sourced from books, newspaper articles and other openly sourced information can sometimes be fragmented and contradictory. Where such material has been used the author has chosen to primarily draw from the work of journalists who have been able to directly interview the individuals involved or who have gained access to international court proceedings. Where TI and LD information has been used, the individuals outlined have been de-identified for legal reasons.

## **The Impact of Radicalised Family Members**

The analysis will begin by looking at one of the more prominent cases of family recruitment and retention in Australia, that of the Jamals. Of seven Jamal brothers three have been separately arrested for involvement with jihadist terrorism. The eldest of the brothers, Saleh Jamal, is the individual who began the family’s involvement. Indeed, the Australian Government has previously stated that Jordanian born Saleh Jamal was critical to the evolution of jihadism in Australia. “His force of personality and unifying presence among small and often disparate groups made him both a lightning rod for disaffection and a rallying point for men looking for direction”.<sup>37</sup> Saleh spent a year in prison in the 1990s for dealing cannabis and friends noted

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Research within the Australian Context’, *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, vol. 2 (2013), p. 182.

<sup>35</sup> Bart Schuurman and Quirine Eijkman, ‘Moving Terrorism Research Forward: The Crucial Role of Primary Sources’, *ICCT Policy Brief*, June 2013, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Chulov, *Australian Jihad: The Battle Against Terrorism from Within and Without* (Sydney: Pan MacMillan, 2006), p. 208.

that it was during this stint in prison that he became “increasingly radicalised”.<sup>38</sup>

In 2004, while on bail for an unrelated matter, Saleh flew to Lebanon using a fake passport. Other Australian jihadists located in Lebanon introduced Saleh to Lebanese terrorist organisation Asbat al-Ansar, and he undertook three weeks training with the group.<sup>39</sup> Following an intercepted phone conversation where Saleh advised his wife “You will never see me again. I am going to a place higher than the mountains”; he travelled from Lebanon to Syria. There he delivered a package used in the bombing of the UN mission in the diplomatic quarter of Damascus. Court documents cite wire taps which reveal that on his return to Lebanon Saleh was greeted with the words “May God reward you with good for what you have done in Syria”.<sup>40</sup>

Saleh was subsequently arrested by Lebanese authorities and sentenced to five years hard labour on charges of possession of weapons and explosives, forging an Australian passport, forming a group and planning acts that endangered state security.<sup>41</sup> The Lebanese court also linked him to the April 2003 bombing of a McDonald’s restaurant in Damascus. Sydney brothers and close associates of Saleh, Maher and Bilal Khazaal, were convicted in absentia for funding that bombing.<sup>42</sup> He served two years before being extradited to Australia to face the charges he originally fled from. Following his return Saleh was sentenced to nine years imprisonment for his part in a 1998 shooting while he was a member of the ‘DK boys’ street gang. He was also sentenced to a further twelve years imprisonment in relation to the drive-by-shooting of a Sydney police station; however the decision was overturned at a subsequent retrial.<sup>43</sup>

While in prison in Lebanon Saleh expressed admiration for Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi<sup>44</sup> and claimed that he was “30 percent likely to launch an attack in Australia” had he not fled. Prior to his extradition Saleh also threatened to fly a plane into the Sydney Harbour Bridge if he was forced to return.<sup>45</sup> This boast regarding involvement with jihadist activity in Australia is not without foundation. It is strongly believed that he played a

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Chulov and Barclay Crawford, ‘Aussie Fugitive’s Terror “Confession”’, *The Australian*, 2 June 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Chulov and Marianne Stigset, ‘Fugitive from Australia “a Contact of Zarqawi”’, *The Australian*, 6 August 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Chulov, ‘Aussie in “Suicide Terror Conspiracy”’, *The Australian*, 26 October 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Stephanie Kennedy, ‘Australians Convicted in Beirut’, *ABC Online*, 24 February 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Walker, ‘Lakemba Gun Suspect Under Arrest in Beirut’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Bibby, ‘Brutal Story Ends as Kneecapper Freed’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 March 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Martin Chulov and Natalie O’Brien, ‘Guilty-Plea Offer Was Easy To Refuse’, *The Weekend Australian*, 10 December 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Martin Chulov, ‘Suspect Offered a Terror Deal—Prisoner Urged to Confess to Harbour Bridge Plot’, *The Australian*, 5 December 2005.

significant part in the genesis of a nine man cell arrested in late 2005 in Operation Pendennis. Of the five men who faced the most serious charges and received the lengthiest sentences, four were close friends of Saleh Jamal.<sup>46</sup> In the weeks leading up to New Year's Eve 2003 Saleh was surveilled in the company of several of these men. Their activities around Sydney Harbour triggered a security alert and a crude oil tanker was forced to anchor off shore during New Year's Eve celebrations.<sup>47</sup> The fifth man was Saleh Jamal's younger brother, Mohammed.

Mohammed Omar Jamal was the youngest member of the cell arrested in Sydney aged just twenty-one at the time of his arrest. Omar was the product of a strict upbringing by his father and claims he was neglected as a child.<sup>48</sup> However, following Saleh's release from prison in the mid-1990s, he exerted influence over Omar who became considerably more religious and devout. Through Saleh he was introduced to the other men who would go on to form the Sydney cell and he further developed these friendships in his own right after Saleh fled Australia.<sup>49</sup>

The judge described a hierarchy within the Sydney cell, noting a leader, vice-captain and middle rank participants "with Jamal bringing up the rear".<sup>50</sup> A character witness described Omar as "a good kid" and "a naive young man probably taken in by these older guys"<sup>51</sup> and at no stage during the trial did the Crown dispute that Omar "participated in the conspiracy at the behest of others who were older and more senior than he".<sup>52</sup> Though Omar was clearly far from central to the group's activities, his decision not to plead guilty meant that he went on trial with the cell's four most significant members. Those men were some of the most experienced and committed jihadists Australia has witnessed and all received between twenty-five and twenty-eight years' incarceration. The Judge did note in Omar's sentencing that he embraced the group's "extremist views and convictions"<sup>53</sup> and he was even recorded in a 2005 phone conversation saying "I will kill John Howard" the then Prime Minister of Australia.<sup>54</sup> However, it is interesting to note that this comment mimics a threat Saleh made while detained in Lebanon. Only a few months earlier Saleh threatened to kill Mr Howard if extradited stating that, "if I was given the opportunity I'd chop him up too, without any doubt, or remorse, because he is a very evil man".<sup>55</sup> Such

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<sup>46</sup> *Regina (C'wealth) v Elomar & Ors* NSWSC 10 (15 February 2010), p. 41.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Chulov and Michelle Wiese Bockmann, 'Plotters' Ship Almost Came in for New Year', *The Australian*, 15 December 2004.

<sup>48</sup> *Regina (C'wealth) v Elomar & Ors* NSWSC 10 (15 February 2010), p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> Malcolm Brown, Rick Feneley and Jacqueline Maley, 'Terrorists Made in Australia', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 February 2010.

<sup>52</sup> *Regina (C'wealth) v Elomar & Ors* NSWSC 10 (15 February 2010), p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>54</sup> Brown, Feneley and Maley, 'Terrorists Made in Australia'.

<sup>55</sup> Martin Chulov, 'I'd Chop Up PM, Claims "Terrorist"', *The Australian*, 26 April 2006.

comments demonstrate the influence Omar's older brother had over his ideology, behaviour and even friendship group.

Omar was not the only brother to be influenced by Saleh. In 2003 Omar travelled with Ahmed Jamal to the Middle East, however the two men were refused entry into Jordan. Though Omar returned to Australia, Ahmed again travelled to the Middle East and in 2004 was captured in Northern Iraq and accused of joining the insurgency. He spent two and a half years in a Kurdish jail with the prison governor noting "he is definitely al-Qaeda ... he said it from his own mouth".<sup>56</sup> His father claimed that he was simply travelling in the region to find a wife,<sup>57</sup> however, the time Ahmed arrived in Iraq just happened to coincide with the height of the insurgency. Of particular relevance are comments made by a Lebanese judge who stated that Saleh Jamal was a contact of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and had been introduced to the 'al Qaeda in Iraq' network through a Bosnian militant he met in Lebanon.<sup>58</sup> If he was indeed attempting to join the insurgence it is not unreasonable to conclude that Saleh's influence played a key role in this decision. Notably, both Saleh Jamal and his brother Ahmed had earlier been refused entry into Jordan, while in the company of a Lebanese Australian who had been previously convicted of attempting to establish Lebanon's first al Qaeda cell.<sup>59</sup> These particular Jamal brothers illustrate the influence close family members can have over each other and provide a clear insight into the role played by family within the Australian jihadist network.

The ideas and actions of family members were also influential among other members of the cell which contained Omar Jamal. Khaled Cheikho was a senior member of the Sydney cell and was described by prosecutors as "one of the leaders, thinkers and co-ordinators" of the group. In his sentencing remarks, the judge described Khaled's position in the cell as just beneath the leader acting as "some type of vice-captain or senior officer".<sup>60</sup> A committed ideologue, Khaled trained at a LeT camp in Pakistan shortly following his marriage to the daughter of the matriarch of the Australian jihadist network.<sup>61</sup> Khaled Cheikho was also on the periphery of the cell arrested in 2003 which was planning to attack the Sydney electricity grid. Khaled Cheikho's nephew Mustafa Cheikho was also a member of the Sydney cell. However, in contrast to Khaled's leadership role Mustafa was described as "more of a

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<sup>56</sup> Martin Chulov, 'Lost in the Badlands', *The Australian*, 21 March 2006. It is essential to note that there have been subsequent allegations that these comments may have been obtained under a degree of torture. If correct, any statement made should be immediately disregarded.

<sup>57</sup> Annabelle McDonald and John Stapleton, 'Aussie Under Arrest "Just Seeking Wife"', *The Australian*, 11 December 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Chulov, 'Sydney Fugitive Linked to Zarqawi', *The Australian*, 31 October 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Harris-Hogan and Zammit, 'The Unseen Terrorist Connection'.

<sup>60</sup> *Regina (C'Vealth) v Elomar & Ors* NSWSC 10 (15 February 2010), p. 25.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28. See below for more detail on the "matriarch" of Australian jihadism.

‘doer’, albeit a very willing one”.<sup>62</sup> Khaled’s influence over Mustafa’s beliefs and actions is evidenced long before the Sydney cell formed. Mustafa travelled to Pakistan and attended the same LeT run training camp just months after his uncle returned from his stint in Pakistan. Indeed, it was noted by the Judge that Mustafa “made a full commitment to the devout observation of his religion” only as he “came more under the influence of his uncle”.<sup>63</sup> Khaled provides a clear example of a prominent strong figure exerting influence over members of his family and drawing them into terrorist activity.

The strong family links which permeate the Sydney cell also extend to the group’s leader and his connections offshore. Born in Lebanon and raised in Australia, Mohammed Elomar was described in court as the “puppet master” of the Sydney cell. His leadership role was explicitly stated by the judge as the reason for sentencing Mohammed to the longest term of incarceration.<sup>64</sup> A 2005 raid on his home turned up twelve firearms and over 10,000 rounds of ammunition. Elomar also co-wrote an order for laboratory equipment and possessed bomb-making manuals and materials. When sentencing Mohammed the judge also expressed that there is “little prospect of rehabilitation. There is no present indication that Elomar will ever renounce the extremist views that fuelled his participation”.<sup>65</sup>

Mohammed Elomar is closely related to Hussein Elomar, who is currently detained in Lebanon for involvement with Sunni terrorist organisation Fatah al-Islam. Arrested in 2007, he has been charged collectively with several dozen other suspected Fatah al-Islam militants. Though he is still awaiting trial, the official charges are murder, resisting security forces, creating a “terrorism gang” and possession of weapons and explosives.<sup>66</sup> Hussein’s nephew Ahmed Elomar was also detained in Lebanon on suspicion of terrorist involvement but following a week of intense questioning was released without charge.<sup>67</sup> In 2011 Ahmed Elomar and convicted Sydney Pendennis member Khalid Sharrouf were also charged with assaulting a man in Sydney,<sup>68</sup> and Elomar was later convicted of assaulting a Shiite shopkeeper he believed was a supporter of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (the man was later forced to sell his business after having his life threatened and his workplace firebombed).<sup>69</sup> Elomar was further charged with hitting a police officer with a metal pole during the violent protests in

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Ed O’Loughlin, ‘Fourth Australian Held on Terrorism Charges’, *The Age*, 17 August 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Kerbaj, ‘Boxer Freed in Lebanon Tells of Days of Torture’, *The Australian*, 4 July 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Kent, ‘Terrorist Khaled Sharrouf’s Anger in Car Parking Dispute’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 December 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Rachel Olding, ‘Home Front Opens in a Foreign War’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 2013.

Sydney in 2012 that occurred as part of the worldwide reaction against the film 'Innocence of Muslims'.<sup>70</sup> In addition to the arrests, a training camp was discovered on a property owned by members of the Elomar family in the lead up to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.<sup>71</sup> Notably, the aforementioned Saleh Jamal was linked to this camp.<sup>72</sup>

The family connections that were prevalent throughout the Sydney cell arrested in Operation Pendennis were also present in the cell which was emerging concurrently in Melbourne. Three brothers, identified here only as MJM145, MJM463 and MJM536 and their cousin MJM563 performed a variety of roles within the cell arrested in Melbourne in November 2005. MJM145 was the treasurer of the group and as such was involved often, although much of his activity was of minimal operational significance. MJM463 was very much included in the group's activities and MJM563 attempted to be, however many in the group maintained reservations regarding his trustworthiness. The participation of MJM536 decreased dramatically over the course of the cell's evolution.<sup>73</sup> Another brother was also on the periphery of the cell. He was subsequently involved in a brawl with a news cameraman at his brother's committal hearing and was charged with affray, assault and behaving in a riotous manner.<sup>74</sup> Collectively, the men's commitment to the cell would be best described as inconsistent and their participation as more of a part-time interest practised with family and close friends.

Listening device and telephone intercept transcripts revealed the men to be particularly open to the influence of others, especially those whom they trusted.<sup>75</sup> As well as the brothers influencing the actions of each other, close friends also had a strong impact upon their involvement and thinking. Significantly, this included the leader of the cell who came to know the family following the death of a family member in 2003, offering them spiritual guidance in a time of crisis.<sup>76</sup> Another prominent figure in the cell, MJM562, was also a close childhood friend of the men.<sup>77</sup> Hence, the likelihood of members of the family outlined above participating in jihadist activity must be considered significantly higher even than individuals who may hold similar

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<sup>70</sup> 'Boxer Faces New Charge over Muslim Riot', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 2012.

<sup>71</sup> James Madden, 'Piecing Together a Picture of Hate', *The Weekend Australian*, 17-18 October 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Simon Kearney and David King, 'Sydney Men the Bombmakers', *The Australian*, 9 November 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Harris-Hogan, 'Australian Neojihadist Terrorism', p. 307.

<sup>74</sup> Stephen Moynihan, 'Brawl Accused Get Bail, but Have to Give Up Passports', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Harris-Hogan, 'Australian Neojihadist Terrorism'.

<sup>76</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* VSC21 (3 February 2009), p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> Pete Lentini, 'Antipodal Terrorists? Accounting for Differences in Australian and "Global" Neojihadists', in Richard Devetak and Christopher Hughes (eds), *The Globalisation of Political Violence: Globalisation's Shadow* (Australia: Routledge, 2008), p. 192.

ideological ideas, simply because of their proximity to members of the network. However, although the family featured significantly in the actions of the cell the men could not be considered the thinkers or leaders of the group and their individual religious knowledge was very basic.<sup>78</sup> The men only became engaged with the ideology (even in its most basic form) through the influence of already established social networks. Moreover, the family's involvement was in many ways a liability for the cell. The men crudely and inconsistently implemented the group's counter-surveillance and security measures, and their attempts at speaking in coded language for discussions regarding money, training and the purchase of weapons on the black market were poor at best.<sup>79</sup>

The influence of family is not limited to those who have grown up together. Partners can share the same ideological beliefs and can serve as a radicalising influence on each other. Australian husband and wife Amira and Yusuf Ali were both killed in the fighting in Syria in 2014.<sup>80</sup> Internationally, Canadians John Nuttall and Amanda Korody radicalised together in isolation from any known jihadist network. In July 2013 the couple attempted to leave pressure cooker bombs at the provincial legislature in British Columbia, Canada.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, several terrorist networks have been known to become increasingly endogamous over time as those within the network marry the relations of other terrorists.<sup>82</sup> This ensures that networks are bound by a trust that becomes increasingly hard to penetrate or break. Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah exemplifies this phenomenon<sup>83</sup> and the group's historical links to Australia has ensured this practice has extended to Australian jihadists.

One woman in particular has been intimately involved in the evolution of the Australian jihadist network. She has been described by an ex-CIA analyst as the "matriarch of radical Islam" and by Australian intelligence agents as the "grand madam of militant Islam".<sup>84</sup> Australian born convert Rabiya Hutchinson married into the original family of jihadists to arrive in the country. Twin brothers Abdul Rahim and Abdul Rahman were the leader

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<sup>78</sup> See Pete Lentini, *Neojihadism: Towards a New Understanding of Terrorism and Extremism?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2013), pp. 130-1.

<sup>79</sup> Pete Lentini, "If They Know Who Put the Sugar it Means They Know Everything": Understanding Terrorist Activity Using Operation Pendennis Wiretap (Listening Device and Telephone Intercept) Evidence', *ARC Linkage Project on Radicalisation 2010 Conference* (2011).

<sup>80</sup> Pia Akerman and Jared Owens, 'Sydney Woman Amira Ali Does with Husband Yusuf in Syria', *The Australian*, 13 January 2014.

<sup>81</sup> David Barnett, '2 Arrested in Canadian Terror Plot "Inspired by al Qaeda Ideology"', *The Long War Journal*, July 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, p. 67.

<sup>83</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous', *ICG Report*, 26 August 2003.

<sup>84</sup> Sally Neighbour, *The Mother of Mohammed: An Australian Woman's Extraordinary Journey into Jihad* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), p. 261.

and co-ordinator of Mantiqi 4, the branch of Jemaah Islamiyah which operated in Australia until just before the 2002 Bali bombings. Though no longer living in Australia the twins' ideology has been carried on by Abdul Rahim's ex-wife, Rabiyyah. Hutchinson's contacts with known members of al Qaeda central, courtesy of time spent in Afghanistan, may well be as extensive as those held by anybody living freely in the Western world. She was also briefly married to Abu Walid al Masri, prominent strategist and father-in-law to Bin Laden's interim successor Saif el-Adel. Hutchinson also developed a close personal relationship with the wife of current al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri (Umm Fatima).<sup>85</sup>

Rabiyyah Hutchinson's ideology and influence has also contributed towards several of her children becoming involved in jihadism. In 2006 Rabiyyah's sons Mohammed and Abdullah Ayub, then aged twenty-one and nineteen, were detained for seven weeks in Yemen on suspicion of being members of al Qaeda and gun running to Somalia. Mohammed Ayub is also one of the 100 or so Australians currently believed to be fighting in the Syrian insurgency, and has appeared on Facebook posing with assault rifles, anti-aircraft artillery and the flag of ISIL.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, Hutchinson's daughter Rahmah is married to the previously discussed Khaled Cheikho, now serving twenty-five years in a NSW maximum security prison.<sup>87</sup> Rabiyyah also attempted to arrange for another of her daughters Devi to be contracted to marry her husband's twin brother Abdul Rahman Ayub,<sup>88</sup> a former al Qaeda training camp instructor who wrote part of the al Qaeda manual on warfare.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, there are several prominent international instances of parents having a radicalising influence over their children. The most well-known example of this in Western jihadist circles is possibly Canadian Ahmed Khadr, a known al Qaeda weapons trafficker killed in Waziristan in 2003, who raised his sons to be militants (with two spending time in Guantanamo bay and another the subject of a US extradition bid for terrorism related offences).<sup>90</sup>

Hutchinson's influence also extended beyond her own children to facilitating others into the jihadist network. Rabiyyah met Australian Islamic convert Jack Thomas at the wedding of her own daughter to Khaled Cheikho and later brokered Thomas' introduction to al Qaeda central and facilitated his training at camp Faruq in Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>91</sup> While Thomas was training, his wife and child were cared for by Rabiyyah. More recently, the Australian

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>86</sup> Mark Schliebs, 'Next Generation of Jihadi Family Joins Syrian War', *The Australian*, 28 January 2014.

<sup>87</sup> *Regina (C'Vealth) v Baladjam & Ors* NSWSC 1467 (30 September 2008), p. 18.

<sup>88</sup> Neighbour, *The Mother of Mohammed*, p. 133.

<sup>89</sup> Sally Neighbour, *In The Shadow of Swords: On the Trail of Terrorism from Afghanistan to Australia* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 146.

<sup>90</sup> Sam Mullins, "'Global Jihad': The Canadian Experience", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 25 (2013), p. 752-3.

<sup>91</sup> Neighbour, *The Mother of Mohammed*, p. 260.

Federal Police (AFP) launched Operation Rochester in 2007 to identify any terrorist activity among Australia's Somali community. The operation was sparked by the presence of Rabiya Hutchinson and other hard-line Muslims at a funeral held for the daughter of an Islamic convert.<sup>92</sup> Operation Neath (outlined earlier) was the joint AFP, Victoria Police and Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) investigation which grew out of Rochester. The operation culminated in the arrest of five men planning a suicide mission at Holsworthy army barracks in Sydney. The influence of Hutchinson highlights the extremely important role facilitator's play in the recruitment and retention of family and close friends into jihadist networks.

### **The Impact of Family who are not Sympathetic**

As an individual begins to adopt a stricter interpretation of an ideology, changes in their behaviour, appearance and/or language are most likely to be recognised by those around them. They will become less willing to engage or compromise with those close to them who hold alternative or pluralist views.<sup>93</sup> Domestic conflict with family and long term friends holding such views may significantly predate an actual terrorist attack. Aside from the radicalising influence Boston bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev appears to have had over his brother, years before the attack Tamerlan assaulted the man his younger sister was dating because he was not a Muslim. Tamerlan also called his uncle an infidel and challenged him to a fight, leading several uncles to cut off contact from the family.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Toulouse shooter Mohamed Merah's brother Abdelkader stabbed his eldest brother Abdelghani seven times after he refused to leave a girlfriend with Jewish ancestry.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, families and close friends are those most likely to recognise shifts in an individual's behaviour (which may indicate that person may be radicalising) well before they commit acts of politically motivated violence.

The Obama Administration's 'National Security Strategy' released in May 2010 recognises this phenomenon, stating that "our best defences against this threat are well informed and equipped families".<sup>96</sup> Those close are best placed to recognise individuals becoming radicalised and increasingly interacting only within smaller tight-knit social networks of people who share

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<sup>92</sup> Richard Kerbaj and Cameron Stewart, 'Child's Burial Prompted Probe', *The Australian*, 13 December 2007.

<sup>93</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, 'The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration', *American Psychologist*, vol. 60 (2005).

<sup>94</sup> William Saletan, 'The Boston Bombers' Awful Parents', *Slate Magazine*, 22 April 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Virginie Andre and Shandon Harris-Hogan, 'Mohamed Merah: From Petty Criminal to Neojihadist', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, vol. 14 (2013), p. 310.

<sup>96</sup> 'National Security Strategy', The White House, Washington, May 2010, p. 18. Available at <[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf)>.

their particular worldview.<sup>97</sup> For example, London bomber Samir Khan began having sustained conflict with his family six years prior to the London bombing, and became fully estranged from his family and immersed within the British jihadist community around four years prior.<sup>98</sup> The following section outlines Australian examples of family members deterring individuals associating with the jihadist network from radicalising and potentially becoming involved in violence.

During the early evolution of the jihadist cell arrested in Melbourne in 2005 MJM221 appeared a committed participant. Early TI and LD transcripts record MJM221 extensively questioning the senior religious figure and leader of the group about issues such as martyrdom, and receiving the response “always when you come to my home you bring me this topic”.<sup>99</sup> However, during the course of the investigation period the father of MJM221 heard rumours regarding his son’s associates and activities.<sup>100</sup> The father immediately called MJM221 and advised him to “stay away from those people, away from them. I don’t want you to get involved with anything”.<sup>101</sup> Later that day MJM221 also received a telephone call from his uncle in Lebanon, presumably at his father’s instigation. MJM221 is told by his uncle that he is involved in “a very dangerous thing”<sup>102</sup> and is advised to “keep away of those group”.<sup>103</sup> MJM221 appears to disengage himself from the group after receiving the phone calls from his father and uncle, demonstrating that their advice and guidance had a significant and positive influence over his actions.

Similarly, Australian Izhar ul-Haque was strongly influenced away from potentially engaging in terrorism by close family. In 2003 Ul-Haque (then just out of his teenage years) travelled from Sydney to Pakistan and received three weeks training at a LeT camp. This paramilitary training was facilitated by Faheem Lodhi, who was arrested later that year (and subsequently convicted) for facilitating communication between LeT and a jihadist cell which was planning to bomb the Sydney electricity grid.<sup>104</sup> Ul-Haque was introduced to Lodhi through his mother (who was good friends with Lodhi’s wife) and court documents note that the close relationship that developed between Ul-Haque and Lodhi was “the major reason for his going to Pakistan”.<sup>105</sup> While training at the camp Izhar wrote his father a letter outlining his distaste for Westerners and his desire to join a jihad and die a

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<sup>97</sup> Sharon Pickering, Jude McCulloch, David Wright-Neville and Pete Lentini, *Counter-Terrorism Policing and Culturally Diverse Communities* (Melbourne: Monash University and Victoria Police, 2007).

<sup>98</sup> Shiv Malik, ‘My Brother the Bomber’, *Prospect Magazine*, June 2007.

<sup>99</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* Listening Device Transcript 55 (22 September 2004), p. 20 [461].

<sup>100</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* Listening Device Transcript 206 (31 December 2004).

<sup>101</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* Telephone Intercept Transcript 209 (31 December 2004), p. 1 [1467].

<sup>102</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* Telephone Intercept Transcript 210 (31 December 2004), p. 3 [1471].

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4 [1472].

<sup>104</sup> *R v Lodhi* NSWSC 691 (23 August 2006).

<sup>105</sup> *R v Ul-Haque* NSWSC 1251 (5 November 2007), p. 5.

martyr.<sup>106</sup> Upon receiving the letter, his father and brother travelled to the camp in an attempt to convince Ul-Haque to come home; he returned to Sydney a short time later.<sup>107</sup> Hence, Ul-Haque can be seen as another example of family intervention influencing an individual, and assisting them to disengage from the radicalisation process.

Crucially, there are also instances of families attempting to prevent radicalisation by approaching authorities for assistance. Yacqub Khayre was arrested on terrorism charges in Melbourne in 2009, then aged only twenty-two. He was accused of being a member of a jihadist cell which planned to attack Holsworthy army barracks in Sydney and during the course of the investigation Khayre also attended an al-Shabab paramilitary training camp in Somalia.<sup>108</sup> However, members of his family had previously alerted authorities to his potentially dangerous behaviour. On several occasions his uncle raised serious concerns that Khayre was on a “destructive path” predominantly due to the social group he interacted with after leaving home and dropping out of school. Following his arrest the family felt let down by the authorities’ lack of pre-emptive action.<sup>109</sup>

There have been several other prominent examples of family intervention in other Western countries. The father of ‘underwear bomber’ Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab came forward following the failed attack claiming that he had informed the US embassy in Lagos of his concerns regarding his son’s behaviour months before the attempted attack.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, the father of an eighteen-year-old British man alerted authorities to the fact that his son and a friend were travelling to fight in the Somali insurgency, possibly with al-Shabab. The father followed the pair to Kenya, and information he provided to local authorities allowed the pair to be intercepted by anti-terrorist police before they crossed the border.<sup>111</sup> These examples clearly illustrate that families are potentially strategically positioned to both recognise and prevent serious radicalisation.

## **Family Responsibility**

Family responsibility can also have a positive impact on the thinking and actions of individuals who may otherwise have engaged in violent activity. Having a family limits the amount of free time available to engage in extremist activities and alters an individual’s priorities and outlook on the

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<sup>106</sup> Martin Chulov and Trudy Harris, ‘The Award-winning Life of a Suburban “Terrorist”’, *The Australian*, 1 May 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Trudy Harris, ‘Ul-Haque Saw West as Animals’, *The Australian*, 30 April 2004.

<sup>108</sup> Zammit, ‘The Holsworthy Barracks Plot’.

<sup>109</sup> Liam Houlihan, ‘Yacqub Khayre was a Faultless Child, his Uncle Claims’, *The Australian*, 6 August 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Gordon Woo, ‘Interdiction of Plots with Multiple Operatives’, in Uffe Kock Wiil (ed.), *Counterterrorism and Open Source Intelligence* (New York: Springer, 2011), p. 57.

<sup>111</sup> Andy Bloxham and Mike Pflanz, ‘British Teenagers Arrested by Anti-terrorist Police after Father Alerts Authorities’, *The Telegraph*, 19 October 2011.

world. During the course of the investigation into the activities of the cell arrested in Melbourne in 2005, several individuals were only able to engage with the operational activities of the group 'part-time' due to family commitments and associated responsibilities. For instance, the time MJM243 was able to commit to assisting with the activities of the cell was seriously impeded by his wife and yet MJM243 was described as a "valuable advisor" to the group, due in part to the fact he was the only cell member to have overseas training experience. MJM243 attended a camp in Afghanistan in 2001, where he pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden.<sup>112</sup> However, the judge who oversaw his trial noted that his commitment to the cell "waxed and waned from time to time" and that "this situation may have been brought about by increasing family responsibilities which he had acquired".<sup>113</sup> There are at least half a dozen occasions throughout the course of the investigation where group members were urging this man to participate in activities, yet he was unable to commit much time due to practical considerations such as his wife being sick or having to care for his children.

Additional restrictions and complications caused by family commitments were mentioned elsewhere by members of the same cell. Following a weekend training camp one member of the Melbourne group noted in reference to a jihadist cell developing simultaneously in Sydney,

up there, they got sleeping bags, three hundred dollar sleeping bags, they got guns, they got, praise is to Allah, tents, compass, knives, everything, praise is to Allah. What have we got here? ... Our wives on our backs, that's it.<sup>114</sup>

This is not to suggest that the restrictions placed on the men by their associated family responsibilities were the sole reason for the cell's failure. However, it was certainly the case that some members were not as committed as others and that family considerations contributed to their more limited engagement.

Another member of the cell arrested in Melbourne in 2005 demonstrated that he was aware that starting a family of his own would impact his ability to engage in terrorism. When discussing the idea of marriage and children MJM516 stated "I've been running away from it; I don't want it and this is having a responsibility, having children and the like. I don't want. I know if I go down this path that's it".<sup>115</sup> MJM516 also noted that his father held the same ideological commitments; "my dad, may Allah guide him, long time ago my dad had an opportunity ... I owe him because had he not had such an intention I wouldn't have learnt all of these things ... we had tapes ... that

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<sup>112</sup> *R v Kent* VSC 431 (20 October 2008), p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> *R v Kent* VSC 375 (2 September 2009), p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* Listening Device Transcript 368 (17 May 2005), p. 17 [2843].

<sup>115</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* Listening Device Transcript 441 (17 September 2005), p. 25 [3647].

would sell for souls and money”.<sup>116</sup> MJM516 stated that the reason for his father’s disengagement was his wife and children and as a consequence of observing his father’s life decisions, MJM516 became adamant not to marry. Instead, he planned to attend an overseas training camp and had received provisional acceptance in the form of a letter.<sup>117</sup> However, not all of his family was necessarily supportive of his actions and ideas. Raids conducted in the home of MJM516 uncovered a letter written to him by his sister, urging her brother “not to do anything stupid”.<sup>118</sup>

## Conclusion

Though it is impossible to completely extricate the influence of friends and family away from the myriad of other external effects which impact the radicalisation process it is clear that, at least within the Australian context, the influences of these close personal relationships is a key to understanding the jihadist network. The cases outlined in this study demonstrate the impact of close pre-existing relationships in the evolution and adaptation of the network. Whether positive or negative, the influence of immediate family is evidenced in the decision-making process of many key figures within the Australian jihadist scene. This finding has significant implications for future counter-terrorism/countering violent extremism policy in Australia, especially in light of recent developments in Syria. In order to prevent further radicalisation, and potentially a catastrophic act of mass casualty terrorism, focus needs to be directed towards addressing the close family and friendship influences which draw people into the Australian jihadist network.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 24 [3646].

<sup>117</sup> *R v Benbrika & Ors* (Supreme Court of Victoria, February-September 2008): [4154].

<sup>118</sup> Lentini, ‘Antipodal Terrorists?’, p. 195.