

## “They want us to be Afraid”

### Developing a Metric for the Fear of Terrorism

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*Abstract: There is a range of scales to measure different psychological and behavioural responses in the research literature. However, there is no summative measure for community fear. In this paper the authors report on a major national survey of Australian Muslims and the broader community that creates a metric, or barometer, to measure fear among communities in Australia after 9/11. The paper will also report on major qualitative research investigating community responses to the media and political discourses on terrorism and fear. These quantitative and qualitative data provide a picture Australian Muslim communities under siege. The findings reported in the paper are a part of an Australian Research Council (ARC) project on the responses of Muslim communities to media reporting on terror.*

**Keywords: Measures of Fear, Australian Moslem and non-Moslem Responses to Media**

**Reporting of Terror, Agenda Setting**

*I am scared. Scared in a sense that if it did happen, what the hell is going to happen to us?*

*Sheikh Faizal Gaffoor quoted in the West Australian Newspaper, 11 November 2005.*

Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in 2001, polls in the United States revealed a heightened level of fear and anxiety about the likelihood of further terrorist attacks. According to one poll, 52 percent of Americans said they could imagine themselves or a loved one as a victim of a terrorist attack (Kakutani, 2001). Despite the fact that risk assessment studies in Australia underline that the actual risk of a terrorist attack is marginal in comparison to many other mortality risks such as smoking and car accidents (Mueller, 2004; Viscusi, 2003), Australian polls also indicated heightened levels of fear and anxiety about a possible terrorist attack in Australia. According to a poll published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in April 2004, 68 percent of Australians believed that Australia was at threat of an imminent terrorist attack (Michaelsen, 2005; Viscusi, 2003).

A national project at Edith Cowan University funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant (Safeguarding Australia) examines the nature of the fear of terrorism operating within the Australian community since the September 11 terrorist attacks. The project incorporates a qualitative research study on audience constructions of the media and popular discourse on terrorism. This stage of the project compares the impact of the terrorism discourse as experienced by Muslim Australians to that of the broader Australian community. The findings of this study were used to inform the development of an innovative quantitative metric of fear designed to measure how Australians are responding to

the fear of terrorism. Research into the effects of fear on social behaviour has traditionally focused on two patterns of behavioral responses to fear: restrictive behaviours which assume that people constrain their behaviour to avoid circumstances considered unsafe, and assertive behaviours which involves people adopting protective behaviours in circumstances considered to be unsafe (Liska, 1988). A analysis of empirical evidence collected was conducted in the first stage of the project to develop a construct typology of fear (Becker, 1940). The results pointed to the fear of terrorism as affecting both restrictive and protective behaviours. As the first of its kind, the metric of fear measures the extent to which Australians are constraining their behaviours and adopting protective behaviours in response to the fear of terrorism.

### **The Fear of Terrorism**

There is no internationally accepted, unitary definition of terrorism. A brief review of the literature on terrorism reveals over 100 definitions. In Australia, terrorism is defined by the Australian Defence Force as the “use or threatened use of violence for political ends or for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear” (Martyn, 2002). Among the various definitions of terrorism that exist is the universal notion that terrorism uses violence, targets non-combatants, is intended to intimidate and creates a state of terror. Importantly, all definitions agree that fear is the ultimate aim of terrorism.

Fear is perhaps the most intense of human emotions and can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Fear can be a rational response to the presence of a real danger or an irrational response to an imaginary danger; it can paralyse or it can motivate; it can serve a political purpose or it can serve a deep psychological need, it can be instinctive, inherent to our psychological makeup or it can be historically specific. Private fears, such as phobias, are legacies of individual psychologies and experiences. The fear of terrorism however, is typically a community fear arising out of conflicts between societies. Community fear impels societies to re-affirm their collective allegiance to a set of common political values and to mobilize against an identified threat to these values. This often finds expression in aggression, marginalisation, alienation and rejection of anything or anyone who challenges the shared values and cultural worldviews of a particular society.

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, a new discourse of terrorism has emerged as a way of expressing how the world has changed and defining the way things are today (Altheide, 2004). Terrorism has become the new metonym for our time where the ‘war on terror’ refers to a perpetual state of alertness as well as a range of strategic operations, border control policies, internal security measures and public awareness campaigns such as ‘be alert, not alarmed’ (Aly, 2005). The ‘*atmosfear*’ of terror has permeated the construction of the Western world as constantly at threat of terrorism. The media and political construction of September 11 and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ is one in which the West is in a perpetual state of alert

from a foreign, alien, politically defined 'other', where, as Brian Massumi (2005) states, "Insecurity...is the new normal" (p. 31).

The evolving media and popular discourse on terrorism frames the war on terror as a global battle between 'us' and 'them' and 'the West' and 'others', whereby the 'others' become the objects of fear, concern and suspicion. Framed in a rhetoric that portrays it as a battle for the Western values of democracy and freedom, the 'war on terror' becomes not just an event in space and time but a metonym for a new world order drawing on distinctions between 'us' and 'them' and 'the West' and 'others' and motivating collective identity based on a construction of 'us' as victims and 'them' as the objects of fear, concern and suspicion. The rhetoric used in the 'war on terror' is characterised by the familiar invocation of terms like democracy and freedom to make distinctions between 'the West and the rest' and to legitimize references to civilized and uncivilized worlds. In his speech delivered at the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Session on Terrorism on January 20, 2003, Colin Powell invoked the rhetoric of a clash of civilisations and urged "We must rid the civilized world of this cancer.... We must rise to the challenge with actions that will rid the globe of terrorism and create a world in which all God's children can live without fear". US President George Bush, in his address to the joint houses of Congress shortly after September 11 stated "This is the world's fight. This is civilisation's fight" (cited in Brown, 2002, p. 295). The political discourse on terrorism in Australia is one in which Australia is recurrently portrayed as being at threat of an imminent terrorist attack. In a series of media releases since the September 11 attacks, Australia's Prime Minister John Howard has recurrently referred to Australia as being at imminent threat of a terrorist attack. In December 2002 the Prime Minister released the first of what was to be many counter-terrorism packages and issued a media release stating "Australia has been at a heightened level of national security alert since September 11 2001. This extended period of heightened alert for acts of terrorism is unprecedented in Australia's history" (*National Security Campaign*, 2002). Earlier that year, after the Bali bombings in Indonesia in October, the Australian Prime Minister announced amendments to Australia's counter-terrorism laws, reiterated his previous statements about security and added that the Bali bombings were a personal attack on Australia, "The terrorist attacks on the United States last year revealed that we are now operating in a new security environment. The Bali bombings tragically brought that directly and personally home to Australians" (*Counter-terrorism review*, 2002). In a media release on the strengthening of the counter terrorism laws, the Prime Minister stated, "while we have been fortunate not to suffer a terrorist attack on our soil, Australians have been the victims of attack overseas and Australia itself has been a target for terrorists in the past". In reference to the need for legislative reform, the Prime Minister referred specifically to the circumstances of the London terror attacks, "The terrorist attacks on the London transport system in July have raised new issues for Australia and highlighted the need for further amendments to our laws" (*Counter- terrorism laws strengthened*, 2005). The government's apparent insistence that Australia is at threat of an imminent terrorist attack is captured in

the National Security Information Campaign, “Let’s Look Out For Australia”, first launched in December 2002. In September 2004, a new phase of the campaign was launched entitled “Help Protect Australia from Terrorism”. The campaign includes television, press, transit and outdoor advertising urging Australians to report “possible signs of terrorism to the National Security Hotline”. The use of both visual and print media ensures that the campaign is highly visible to Australians and communicates a message that Australians need to be consistently vigilant about the threat of terrorism.

The media and popular discourse on terrorism in Australia has evolved into a debate on the Islamic presence in Australia portrayed as a clash of cultural values. This discourse has been assisted by comments from Federal politicians. In an address to the Sydney Institute on 23 February 2006 on the topic of Australian Citizenship, the Federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, addressing the audience on Australia’s democratic tradition stated that those who oppose democratic legislature and do not abide by Australia’s laws should be refused Australian citizenship. He immediately followed this comment with a reference to terrorists and those who support them and then proceeded single out Muslims as those who have “strong objections” to the Australian values of “loyalty, democracy, tolerance, the rule of law...” (Costello, 2006). Shortly afterwards, the Federal Government announced its intention to introduce a formal citizenship test designed to test commitment to a set of ill defined ‘Australian values’.

The construction of the war on terror as a global battle between ‘the West and the rest’ imbues the fear of terrorism with redemptive qualities, enabling and facilitating behavioural responses associated with a reaffirmation of identity and membership of a collective while simultaneously denying membership to that collective to those perceived to be “other”. This response has found expression in the perception of Islam, and by association Australian Muslims, as an alien, culturally incompatible and ominous other.

## **Research Methodology**

The research project at Edith Cowan University, *Australian responses to the images and discourses of terrorism and the other: establishing a metric of fear* is a national, cross-methodological, investigation of public opinion formation, interpersonal communication and media messages. The project interrogates the key media events and messages, as remembered and circulated by specific audiences, to analyse different constructions of ‘fear’, ‘terrorism’ and ‘the other’ in Australian society. The outcomes include an innovative barometer of community fear and associated perceptions of risk and the first Australia-wide analysis of public perceptions of/reactions to the terrorist threat and risk.

The first level of inquiry involved an empirical study as part of a PhD research activity. The purpose of this research was to chart how people are constructing and responding to the media discourse on terrorism, comparing responses from members of Western Australia’s Muslim communities with those of the broader community. The study involved focus groups and individual in-depth interviews

with Muslim Australians and members of the broader community in an examination of how Australian audiences are responding to the evolving media discourse on terrorism since the September 11 attacks on the United States. Ten focus groups were conducted with 90 participants from various ethnic backgrounds, religious and age groups. Of the ten focus groups, four were held exclusively with Australian Muslim participants in gender specific groups and one targeted senior citizens. Participants in the focus groups ranged in age from 17 to over 70, and were representative of 28 different ethnic groups and 14 different religious groups. On average, the focus groups lasted 90 minutes, though some went on for well over 2 hours, and attracted between 8-12 participants with the researcher acting as moderator. The researcher's strong links with Muslim communities in Western Australia (the researcher is an active member of the Western Australian Muslim community) facilitated the recruitment of Muslim participants, two of which targeted Muslim youth. Participants in the broader community focus groups were recruited using a combination of methods including the distribution of a flier, email and snowball technique.

The focus groups discussed issues relating to the media discourse on terrorism and public opinion on Australian Muslims including perceptions of the terrorist threat to Australia, the dominant messages in the media discourse on terrorism in relation to Muslims and Australians and how information and opinions about terrorism are circulated. An initial analysis of the focus groups provided themes for further investigation through a series of 70 in-depth individual interviews with equal numbers of Muslim respondents and respondents from the broader Australian community. The individual interviews used prompts to explore respondents' constructions of media messages and the influence of the media on their opinions and perceptions.

Thematic analysis techniques were used to analyse the focus group transcripts with the aid of NVivo data analysis tool. This approach was apt for the purpose of examining the essential nature of fear and to representing how people are experiencing the fear of terrorism in their everyday lives. Asensio (2000) describes the outcome of phenomenological research as "a set of categories of description which describe the variation in experiences of phenomena" in ways that allow researchers to deepen their understanding of the phenomena. The constructs derived from the focus group analysis were then used to inform the development of a summative scale of the fear of terrorism. Variables identified in the focus groups informed the adaptation of rape and vulnerability inventories to create a Fear of Terrorism Survey. The survey, consisting of 25 questions in a summative Likert scale, was administered by telephone to 750 households nationally. In order to obtain a statistically useful sample of Australian Muslims, the survey was administered to 105 Muslim households, an over-representative number in comparison to the demographic data, which places Muslim Australians at just 1.5% of the total Australian population<sup>1</sup>. Based on the findings from the focus groups, the Fear Survey included questions to test behavioural responses to

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<sup>1</sup> ABS Data from the 2001 Census. Available from [www.omi.wa.gov.au](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au)

the fear of terrorism and self reported feelings of safety before and after the September 11 terrorist attacks as well as questions on individual and community identity.

### *Perceptions of the Terrorist Threat*

Participants from the broader Australian community expressed fear and concern about the threat of a terrorist attack on Australia, particularly the threat of “homegrown terrorism” while members of Muslim communities were more concerned about the possible repercussions and the backlash of a terrorist attack. Participants were asked to rate the likelihood of a terrorist attack in Australia on a scale from 1-5. On this scale, non-Muslims consistently rated the likelihood of an attack as either likely or highly likely compared to Muslims who rated it as either unlikely or highly unlikely. Furthermore, non-Muslims indicated that it was more likely that Australia would experience a terrorist attack from within (similar to the London bombings) than from an external source such as Al Qaeda. Participants were also asked to indicate on a scale from 1-5 how anxious or worried they were about the possible government response to a terrorist attack in Australia and the impact of a terrorist attack on themselves or their family. On this question, Muslims consistently rated their levels of anxiety higher than non-Muslims.

This is not surprising when you consider some of the reports of aggression and vilification that came out after the September 11 2001 attacks in the US where Australian Muslims were targeted. One respondent who was working at a Muslim college at the time recalls:

*I came to work in the morning. Everybody was scared about the security of the school so we locked up the gates. There was this notion going on that the children might be harmed, the school might be damaged in one way or another. Everyone was concerned about the safety of the children. Because people believed that there was going to be a backlash inevitably*

The kind of fear expressed by Muslims is also not surprising in light of the evolving media and political discourse on terrorism which constructs Australian Muslims not only as a terrorist threat but also a threat to so called “Australian values” although there is little detail available as to what exactly those values are and how exactly the presence of Muslims in Australia constitutes a threat to them. Muslim participants expressed that they felt they were being targeted by the media and by politicians and that the media frequently identified them as terrorists.

*The media has directed the westerners that it is the Muslims, it is Al Qaeda who are behind it and unfortunately the people start looking at you like oh, you're the guilty one. The law says you are innocent until proven guilty and it has changed that rule by saying you are guilty until proven innocent. So basically we were victimised and anything happens around the world now, any attack, any thing the fingers are pointed at us no matter what.*

### ***Behavioural Responses to the Fear of Terrorism***

Participants who expressed fear of terrorism expressed their fear in terms of changes in behavioural patterns. Participants related their fear to the salience of media reports on global terrorism and the Australian government's media campaign. Some participants adopted preventative behaviours such as avoiding public transport and air travel. Others were unaware of their own anxieties until they were placed in situations in which their fear motivated them to take on assertive or precautionary behaviours such as increased awareness of their surroundings. One participant for example related the following story of her reaction to an unattended bag on public transport:

*I was in Melbourne in December on holiday with my family and caught a tram into the city; and this says something about me, that I've actually adopted those messages. But there was a bag that was left in the middle of the tram, but it was sort of around peak hour time. So I sat there with my sister trying to discuss whether or not we were being stupid about the fact that there was a bag on this tram, and what are we going to do! We mentioned it to the tram guy and he was like 'Oh yeah'...*

Several participants stated that in the immediate aftermath to the terrorist attacks in New York, London and Bali they ceased going out into public places such as shopping centres. Four participants stated that they had changed travel plans to Bali after the 2002 bombings. The most frequently cited change in behaviour was an increase in suspicion of others, described by one focus group as "paranoia", particularly suspicion of people who conformed to the media image of terrorists:

*It's just funny, you know "Watch out for Australia" thing. I mean gosh if someone looks at you sideways, that's almost an act of terrorism.*

*I remember we were on a plane and there was this big guy with a beard sitting a few rows ahead of us. He had a box on his lap and he was looking kind of nervous and he was mumbling something, sort of talking to himself. My mum grabbed my arm and she was panicking. This guy started to open the box and Mum was like "oh my God, oh my God he's a terrorist. He's got a bomb". Then he opened the box and pulled out a dim sum.*

Muslim participants expressed the most acute behavioural responses to global terrorist events. In several cases, female participants who wear the hijab (the traditional Islamic dress which covers the hair) related periods of anxiety about venturing into public spaces for fear of being vilified or attacked. Often this anxiety was not based on personal experiences or relationships with individual members of the broader community, which were often described as positive, but on a perception of the Muslim community at risk and an assumption that the broader community was susceptible to media messages that encouraged hostility

towards Muslims. One woman stated that after the 9/11 attacks she did not leave her home for two weeks. Reports about attacks on Muslim women wearing hijab in public spaces circulated among the Muslim communities and cultivated fear among members of the Muslim communities and a perception that the community was being vilified and held responsible for terrorist activities.

### ***Fear Salience***

Focus group participants from the broader Australian community stated that their levels of fear and anxiety over a possible terrorist attack increased when media reports about global terrorist activities were most salient. Participants were able to trace heightened levels of fear and anxiety to media reports on terrorist activities. Many stated that, at these times, they would talk to opinion leaders in order to “put things into perspective”. Many described their fear as “irrational” and perceived it as a negative impact of the media discourse.

The Australian government’s media campaign also drew responses from the focus group participants. In particular, participants reported that receiving the ‘Be Alert, Not Alarmed’ pack increased their level of fear and anxiety of a terrorist attack as the following story illustrates:

*The information that I’ve been getting is mainly from the mass media and current affair programs. I didn’t really take much notice of anything until John Howard sent out his, I can’t remember what it was called, the terrorism pack, what to do if we were under attack, and I sort of thought ‘Wow maybe we are more at risk than I think we are’.*

*At first I didn’t read it, but my eldest son he read it and he followed the instructions and he got himself stocks and everything at the front door and he rung me and the second son said, “look, we’d better do the same and we’d better have a plan of where we’re going to go”. So we decided we’d all go to the youngest son in Northam and I was asked to ring him. Well I rang him. He laughed himself silly and he said “Oh Mum, I thought you had more sense than that”. And he said, “OK if it happens can you let me know when you’re coming because we can pack up and go. We’ve got a three bedroom house and not enough room”. So you know I ended up being rational, sort of thinking this is all quite stupid, and I threw Johnny Howard’s pack in the bin and I got all this stuff that I’d bought and we ate it!*

The salience of terrorism in the media and political discourse may be seen as strategic points which impact on the level of community fear and anxiety about terrorism. Strategic points are events or experiences that result in a heightened awareness of terrorism and a subsequent increase in the fear of a terrorist attack. Apart from media salience and the government's media campaign, the focus groups also highlighted a number of other strategic points in the construction of fear: knowing someone who was a victim of a terrorist attack; having resided in or having close family members who reside in London or New York; talking to others whose opinions are influential on one's own threat perception.

### ***What people fear***

Apart from expressing fear and anxiety about the terrorist threat to Australia, participants in the focus groups also expressed fear of the government response to the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, London and Bali based on a perception that the corresponding increase in security impinges on individual freedoms and denotes a shift towards the creation of a "police state".

The focus groups findings indicate that both Australian Muslims and those in the broader community believe that the government and media discourse is constructed with the overriding aim of instilling fear with comments such as: "I think the messages that are coming in to us are definitely 'Be Afraid', 'Watch your Back' 'Be Very Careful', 'Don't trust anyone'; " "this message of fear is being jammed down our throats" and "There are these evil terrorists around and you and your two point four kids with your one and a half cars and your nice suburb and that they might be right next to you ... like trying to create unease, suspicions..". Muslim participants expressed an acute awareness of themselves as the objects of fear and suspicion: "the government love to create a monster you know to feed and to frighten people- now we are the monster".

### ***Personal risk and community risk***

Among participants from the broader community, personal risk was perceived to be lower than community risk. In other words, participants felt that a terrorist attack was imminent but that they were not likely to be victims of a terrorist attack. This is partly due to the fact that most participants thought that a terrorist attack would most likely occur in Eastern State cities with higher population densities and with national landmarks such as the Harbour Bridge or Opera House. It can also, in part, be explained in terms of the impersonal impact/unrealistic optimism theory which proposes that media messages about the terrorist threat that inspire fear affect people's perceptions of social risk but do not necessarily affect their perceptions of personal risk.

*I believe that perhaps we have a terrorist threat, not, I don't feel in Perth, but when I'm over East I do.*

*it might not happen in Perth but definitely the likes of Sydney, Melbourne ... I think will experience something.*

Muslim participants however related a perception of risk at both the community and personal level. Unlike members of the broader community however, Muslims did not define risk in terms of a terrorist attack on Australian soil but in terms of a backlash from the broader community. As Aly and Balnaves (2005) note:

The atmosphere of terror finds many expressions among the Muslim communities in Australia: the fear of backlash from some sectors of the wider community; the fear of subversion of Islamic identity in meeting the requirements of a politically defined 'moderate' Islam; the fear of being identified as a potential terrorist or 'person of interest' and the fear of potentially losing the rights bestowed on all other citizens.

Muslims expressed their fear and anxiety not only in terms of self but also in terms of the risk to their families, community and to Islam. The following comments from Muslim participants who remarked on discussions with fellow Australian Muslims after the September 11 attacks summarise how Australian Muslims perceive the terrorist threat:

*We discussed the impact on Muslims. So we were concerned about ourselves, our people you know and Islam as well.*

*My feeling was the reaction would be so big I didn't want it to affect my people*

### ***Developing the Fear of Terrorism Scale***

Several scales have been developed that attempt to measure the fear of rape and the fear of crime (Liska, 1988; Senn, 1996; Warr, 1990). For the most part, investigations into the fear of crime have focused on describing and explaining variations in fear among different genders, ages and social groups (Warr, 1990). In terms of examining fear phenomenologically in order to understand fear as a social force that impacts on behaviour, two general patterns have emerged. One concerns preventative or restrictive behaviours in which individuals will take measures to avoid places and situations perceived as dangerous. The other concerns protective or assertive behaviours in which individuals will undertake protective measures in places and situations perceived as dangerous.

In surveying the range of scales that could be modified to include the constructs extracted from the first stage of the project, the researchers found that there were no scales that measured both patterns of behavioural responses to fear.

There are also no existing scales that measure personal perceptions of risk as well as community perceptions of risk. The Fear of Rape Scale developed by Gordon & Riger (1979), provided a sound basis for developing the Fear of Terrorism Scale. Modifications to this scale included the omission of some questions specific to context of rape and the inclusion of questions designed to measure the constructs that evolved from the phenomenological analysis. These questions related to changes in behavioural patterns, strategic points in the construction of fear such as the receipt of the “Be alert, not alarmed” package, personal and community risk perceptions and to personal experiences of terrorism. Respondents were also asked to rate their feelings of safety before and after the September 11 attacks as the focus groups revealed that people were more likely to articulate their feelings in terms of safety as opposed to fear and anxiety. Respondents were asked to rate their answers along a five point Lickert scale in response to the following items:

- How safe did you feel before 11 September 2001
- How safe did you feel after 11 September 2001
- I think twice before going to a crowded shopping centre
- If I have to take the train, tram or bus I feel anxious
- How safe do you feel taking public transport?
- How safe do you feel traveling by airline?

Respondents were asked to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the following questions designed to test behavioural changes, responses to strategic points, experiences of terrorist attacks and community risk perceptions:

- If you saw an unattended bag at a bus or train stop or in any other public place, would you report it?
- If you saw an unattended bag at work, would you report it?
- Have you over the last 2 years traveled to any of these countries- US, England, Bali, Spain, Italy, Singapore, Indonesia/ Bali, Thailand, Malaysia?
- Do you intend to travel to any of these countries in the next year?
- Did you receive the ‘Be alert’ package?
- Did you keep your ‘Be alert’ package?
- Did you read it?
- Did you, or do you know anyone who was killed or harmed in a terrorist attack?
- What was your relationship with that person?
- Do you know anyone who had a close friend who was killed or harmed in a terrorist attack?
- Do you feel that you belong to a community that is viewed negatively by others?
- Do you feel that the media portrays you or the community you belong to negatively?

The final survey incorporated some questions from the Fear of Rape scale on restrictive and protective behaviours that were used to gain a sense of how safe or unsafe people felt within their own neighbourhoods or communities, such as:

- I avoid going out alone
- I ask friend to walk me to my car in public car parks
- I feel confident walking alone in my neighbourhood
- If I heard that someone had been assaulted in my neighbourhood, I wouldn't leave the house unless I really had to.

A number of questions that tested general levels of suspicion and wariness of others were also retained:

- I am wary of people generally
- In general, I am suspicious of people
- In general, I am afraid of people
- When I am choosing a seat on the bus or train, I am conscious of who is sitting nearby

### ***Initial Findings***

The results of the Fear of Terrorism Scale confirm a dramatic change in the reported feelings of safety before and after the September 11 terrorist attacks. 710 respondents (over 90%) reported feeling either very safe or fairly safe before the terrorist attacks. In comparison only 487 (65%) stated that they felt either very safe or fairly safe after the terrorist attacks. Results also showed a negligible response to feeling 'very unsafe' prior to the terrorist attacks (11 responses) increasing to 92 (8.1%) after the attacks.

Consistent with patterns reflected in fear of crime surveys, gender, income and levels of education impacted on feelings of fear and safety in relation to the terrorist risk. Table 1 illustrates that, 204 men and 224 women respondents reported feeling very safe before the 9/11 attacks. These numbers declined to 125 and 82 respectively after the attacks. In addition, the number of women who reported that they felt very unsafe after the attacks increased from 3 to 69 compared to an increase from 8 to 23 for men.

Reported feelings of safety before and after the terrorist attacks varied between the top 10 and bottom 10 income households surveyed as shown in Table 2. Those in the bottom 10 income households surveyed were more likely to feel either 'a bit safe' or 'very unsafe' after the September 11 attacks. However, both categories reported a decrease in feeling 'very safe' after the attacks with only a slight variation between the top and bottom 10 income households surveyed. Both categories also showed an increase in reported feelings of 'fairly safe' and 'a bit safe', however this was matched by decreases in reported feelings of 'very safe' and increases in feelings of 'very unsafe'.

Table 3 indicates that respondents with lower levels of education (Year 12 or equivalent and below) felt less safe than respondents with a tertiary qualification. 376 respondents with year 12 or below schooling reported feeling either 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' before the terrorist attacks compared with 340 respondents with a tertiary qualification. Reported feelings of safety decreased for both groups after the attacks with a more significant decrease of 143 for respondents with lower levels of education compared to 103 for tertiary qualified respondents. Respondents with lower levels of education were also more likely to report

feeling ‘very unsafe’ after the terrorist attacks at almost double the rate of respondents with tertiary qualifications. While both categories reported a decrease in feelings of ‘very safe’ after the terrorist attacks, the shift in responses were more heavily skewed towards the lesser feelings of safety (‘a bit safe’ and ‘very unsafe’) for respondents with lower levels of education than for respondents with tertiary qualifications.

Table 1: Feelings of Safety Before and After 9/11 (represented in brackets) , by sex

	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit safe	Very unsafe	Don't know
Male	204 (125)	108 (122)	10 (60)	8 (23)	1 (1)
Female	224 (82)	174 (158)	15 (109)	3 (69)	3 (1)
<i>p &lt; 0.001</i>					

Table 2: Feelings of Safety Before and After 9/11 (represented in brackets), by Top 10 and Bottom 10 Income Households

	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit safe	Very unsafe	Dont know
Top 10	167 (74)	97 (113)	13 (64)	4 (30)	1 (1)
Bottom 10	170 (94)	111 (114)	5 (54)	2 (8)	3 (1)
Special sample*	91 (39)	74 (53)	7 (51)	5 (34)	0 (0)
* Special sample is Moslem respondents					
<i>p &lt; 0.001</i>					

Table 3: Feelings of Safety Before and after 9/11, by Education

	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit safe	Very unsafe	Don't know
Year 12 or equivalent and below	218 (108)	158 (116)	20 (96)	4 (60)	2 (1)
Tertiary qualified Bachelor degree or above, Advanced diploma, Diploma or trade certificate	210 (99)	130 (138)	5 (73)	7 (32)	2 (1)
<i>p &lt; 0.001</i>					

The results of the Survey show a correlation between community perceptions and feelings of safety. Table 4 shows that respondents who considered themselves members of communities that were perceived negatively by the media felt less safe after the terrorist attacks. This correlation is supported by quantitative research including the findings of the focus groups as well as current literature on

the impact of a perceived negative media image Australian Muslims. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, confirms that, “The biggest impact of prejudice on Arab and Muslim Australians is the substantial increase in fear” (HREOC, 2004, p. 77). The Australian Arabic Council reported a massive rise in reports of discrimination and vilification of Arab Australians in the month after the terrorist attacks (p.43). The perceived media bias against Muslims and Arabs is perhaps the most salient issue of concern for Australian Muslims and has been the subject of debate and discussion at numerous forums.<sup>2</sup>

Table 4: Feelings of Safety Before and After 9/11, by Perceived Negative Media Portrayal of the Community in Which Respondent Belongs

	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit safe	Very unsafe	Dont know
Yes	117 (51)	95 (79)	12 (63)	4 (35)	0 (0)
No	311 (156)	187 (201)	13 (106)	7 (57)	4 (2)
Total	207	280	169	92	4 (2)

*p* < 0.026

The focus group participants identified changed behavioural patterns as a response to the terrorism threat. In particular, the perception of a terrorist threat in public places and on public transport was likely to manifest in an increased willingness for participants to report unattended baggage. The Fear of Terrorism Survey confirmed that over 70% of respondents would adopt this form of protective behaviour in response to the terrorist threat.

Table 5: “If you saw an unattended bag at a bus or train stop or in any other public place, would you report it?”

Yes	555	74.0
No	133	17.7
Dont know/Unsure	62	8.3

### The Metric of Fear

The Fear of Terrorism scale is a summative, Likert, scale made up of 22 items with a 0-4 rating. The maximum score for all items is 88 indicating a person who is extremely fearful at home, in their neighbourhood and in their community. A minimum score of 0 indicates a person who feels extremely safe. Figure 1 provides an overview of the summed scores from each respondent.

<sup>2</sup> One of the researchers is an active member of the Western Australian Muslim community and has attended several forums and consultations where the negative image of Muslims in the media has been raised as a significant issue of concern.

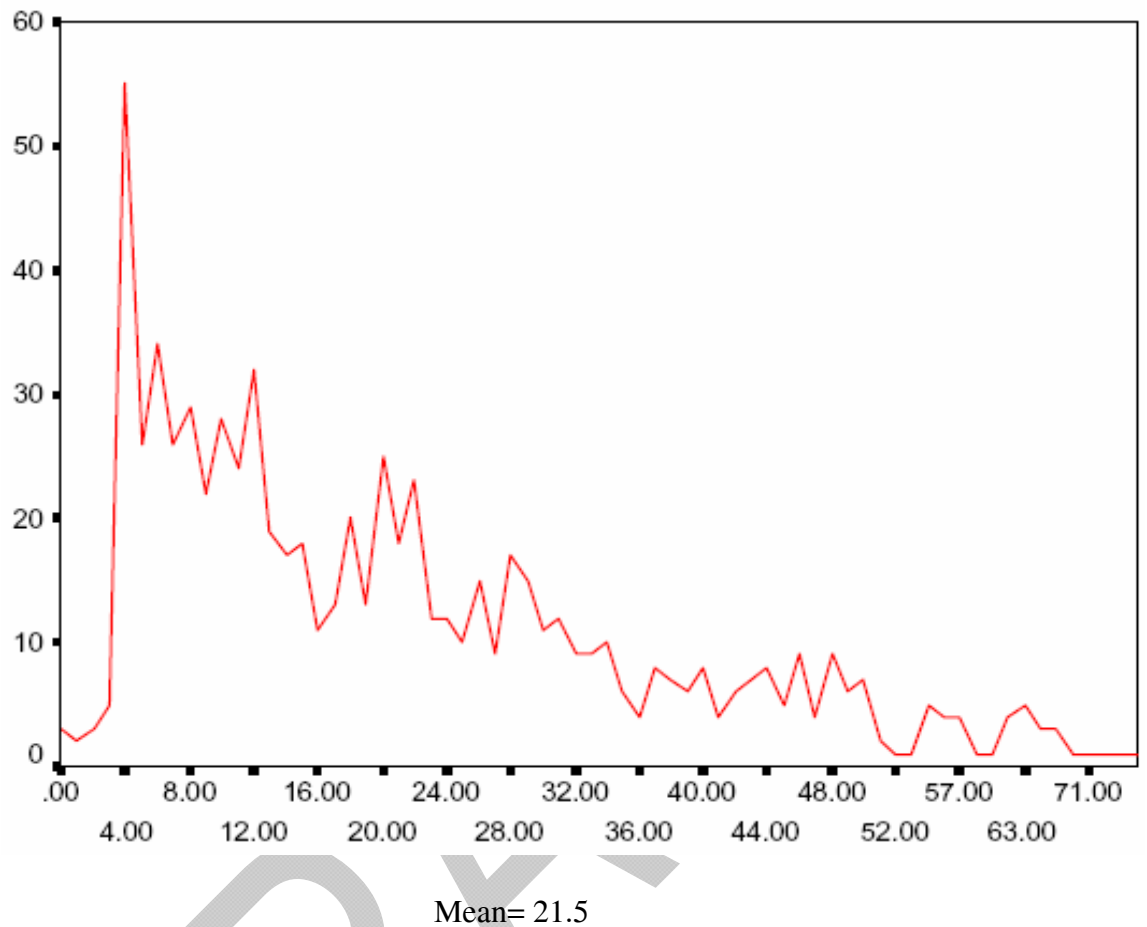


Figure 1: Scores on the Metric of Fear by Frequency, among 750 Respondents (Vertical axis is the number of respondents and the horizontal axis is the aggregate fear scale score)

A break down of the data from the Fear of Terrorism Survey indicates that those above the average score of 21.5 and where there are statistically significant differences tend to be women, those in poorer demographics (the bottom 10 postcodes by income), those less educated and Australian Muslims.

While the Fear of Terrorism Scale confirms that many respondents regardless of gender, age, education, social status or religion feel less safe after the September 11 terrorist attacks, specific demographic groups have a heightened sense of fear at home, in their neighbourhood and within the general community.

### ***Conclusion***

The metric of community fear can be used to better understand restrictive and protective behaviours of individuals and groups of individuals who are afraid within their neighbourhoods, within their communities or within their society. The summative scale, outlined in this paper, was used in the context of the fear of terrorism. Qualitative research elicited perceptions from Muslim and non-Muslim

communities in Perth about safety and fear. These data were then analysed phenomenologically to derive specific constructs that were then used to adapt existing fear scales and develop the Metric of Fear. The scale was piloted and then used in a national Australian survey of 750 homes. The initial findings of the survey demonstrated the value of the scale by highlighting those demographics and communities that were more isolated by virtue of fear, compared with other groups.

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