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**Bin Laden in the Suburbs
Criminalising the Arab Other**

Thanks for invitation by four authors to officially launch their new book and congratulations to the Sydney Institute of Criminology.

It is a timely chronicle of this dark chapter in Australia's history. A chapter when the dark enemy beyond became the enemy within - lurking, incubating, dormant, cellular. When Australian turned against fellow Australian. When our Arab phobia was so overbearing that we became scared of our own shadows.

The book paints the picture of Arabs being framed as 'folk devils' on three fronts: international terrorism, national refugees and local gangs.

Picture yourself gazing out of your besieged homes through the windows, fogged up through all our panting, anticipating the other. Then picture your reaction when you realise that the window is actually a mirror.

We raise our hands to our cheeks and exclaim: "What have we done? Who have we become?" It is a scene reminiscent of the 1990 cartoon-like block-buster "Home Alone". The besieged child barricades the windows, sets up booby traps for the invaders, and realises how desperate and vulnerable he is when unprotected by parental power. Are we so spiritually parentless as a nation that we need to replace Mother England with Uncle Sam?

The mirror reflects how we have been seduced by simplistic stereotypes and how we have been systematically manipulated to harden our hearts against those who want to rape our innocence and "take advantage of us as a soft touch" (p122). By the end of the book, you will see who in fact has used the politics of fear and treated us as a soft-headed target.

The book provides some sobering statistics to help us see the unfogged mirror in its entirety, clarity and depth, rather than the smoke screen of reactive generalisations that we have been fed. It challenges each myth with the sobering question: show me the evidence? ...

This book helps Australians to map out these realities in the cold light of day, rather than in the heat of media deadlines and media headlines.

It debunks the pathological paradigm for understanding criminal behaviour and reminds us of "the dynamics of economic inequality, globalisation, social change or international politics" (p201).

The book untangles and deconstructs the many stereotypes which have been rolled into one interwoven "otherness".

The authors pursue its expose without fear of favour: it does not defend ethnic community leaders, youth workers, religious clergy and even the "other within the other" (p196). ...

The cover of the book reveals the existence of Arab Road in Padstow, near Bankstown. It is peculiar that there is a Howard Rd parallel to it, so I explored whether Arab Rd and Howard Rd ever converge, perhaps down the track. Sadly, not at all.

I am not going to say that this book is so gripping that you cannot put it down. On the contrary, it is so loaded with spices that you need to put it down at the end of each chapter. Pardon the gastronomic metaphor, but please digest in small doses.

I am honoured to declare that *Bin Laden in the Suburbs: criminalizing the Arab Other*, is now launched and firing, not with falafel but with falafali (chilli peppers) !
