

No excuse for incompetence

Dear Editor

I am writing to reflect my irritation at the lack of journalistic competence shown by Richard Kerbaj in the Australian on 23/24 April and then again later on 25 April. Not only was this pitiful sensationalism in its attempt to inflame the terrorism debate.....but also absurd in its baseless accusation of GIRU and Griffith University fostering terrorism links for a measly \$100,000, since this is all they received. In all of this, not a single iota of credible evidence has been put forward. The only "evidence" supporting this article was from an inconsequential judge who claims to have received no answer to his request for information.

The fact that Judge Wall spoke out of turn (in view of his professional portfolio) is one matter. However as a judge, he should have known better and communicated any misgivings he had to the appropriate law enforcement agencies who could then have taken the matter further. This would not have detracted from the sensationalism of a genuinely credible story had it turned out to be true.

Had Richard Kerbaj taken the necessary time and energy to investigate these claims objectively, he would have found that in fact, GIRU was set up to assist in creating a better understanding of Islam and the west. Its primary aim as a research unit within Griffith University was set up to contextualize Islamic ideology within a modern, particularly Australian society and to attempt to provide plausible alternatives to some of the world's controversial issues relating to Islam, Muslims and their interaction with the western world. The latest Phd research thesis at GIRU discusses a solution to the current Palestinian-Israeli problem from a non-violent Islamic perspective. This is ground breaking! In light of this and other current research taking place at this institution, I am flabbergasted that Richard's article extrapolates a "no-answer" from Dr Mohammed Abdalla to imply that Griffith University is "an agent of extreme Islam"

I am surprised that neither the Judge nor Richard is concerned with the increasing number of Saudi students who are present in a number of Australian universities and fill their coffers to the tune of millions of dollars. Then again, this may require some investigative journalism, something Richard has shown that he's not too keen on.

In publishing this article without substantive evidence, Richard has made a desperate and deplorable attempt to re-ignite the now rather sedate Australian-Islam issue in order to stir certain sections of the paper's readership.

Clearly, this kind of belligerence achieves nothing other than to malign and undermine the achievements of the research unit and the goodwill it has fostered since its inception, between both scholars and communities.

The publication of this article speaks volumes of the calibre and integrity of the journalists in the employ of the newspaper.

Kemal Omar