



Matthew Si

MELBOURNE CAR RAMPAGE HORROR ON THE STREETS

Witnesses recall acts of heroism and kindness in the wake of a terrifying rampage that left five pedestrians dead



Jessica Mudie



Amid the bustle of the Melbourne CBD on the sunny afternoon of Jan. 20, real-estate worker “Alice” had just enjoyed lunch with a friend and was heading back to the office for the last bit of work before the weekend. Around 1.30 PM the pair were walking down Bourke Street Mall—a popular shopping strip designated for pedestrians and trams—when they came across the unthinkable. “We saw a car coming through the mall,” says Alice, who asked WHO not to use her real name. “He was driving like a lunatic. It was like something off the TV.” Seconds later, their shock turned to horror. “I saw a body on the front of the car,” she says. “We were just shaking.”

“I saw a body on the front of the car”
—witness “Alice”

Within moments, an entire nation was reeling. At least five people were killed, including a 3-month-old baby, and more than 30 injured, in a rampage Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull called a “shocking, wanton criminal attack.”

Among those killed was 3-month-old Zachary Bryant, whose 2-year-old sister, Zara, was also injured and was in a stable condition in hospital at press time. “He was the most beautiful, loving, happy and perfect little baby we were so lucky to be gifted with,” parents Matthew and Nawwar Bryant said in a statement. Other victims were 10-year-old Thalia Hakin, Melbourne father Matthew Si, 33, a 25-year-old Japanese man and Sydney insurance consultant Jess Mudie, 22, twin to sister Emily. Mudie was in Melbourne visiting her brother and his fiancé. “You will always be a part of us,” said Mudie’s family. “We are constantly inspired by your love for everyone around you.”

The day of carnage began with a stabbing. Police say that during an argument in the pre-dawn hours of Jan. 20, Gargasoulas stabbed his younger brother, Angelo, multiple times at the public-housing unit in Windsor where his mother, Emily, lived. Emily told Seven News that Gargasoulas, who had denounced homosexuals in Facebook rants, fought with Angelo over his sexuality. Angelo, who is recovering in hospital, “was stabbed right through the stomach, the knife came out the other side,”

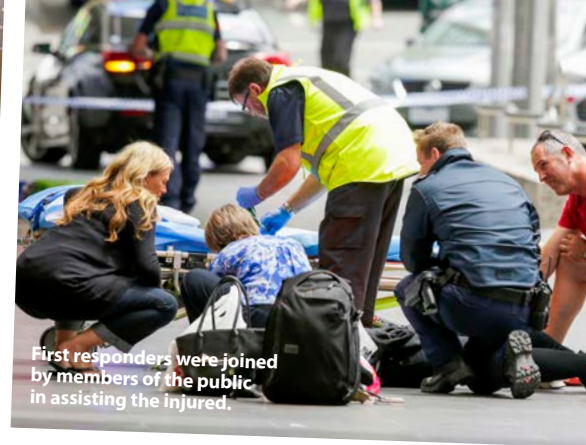
neighbour Gavin Wilson, 76, tells WHO. “But I think he’s going to come good.” Gargasoulas, who hails from Coober Pedy, South Australia, and reportedly is a father of three, then took off in Wilson’s maroon VS Holden Commodore—which he had allegedly stolen two days before—forcibly taking his girlfriend, Akiir Muo, 25, as hostage. “I’ve known him since he was a little kid,” says Wilson, who is also Emily’s former partner. “He’s always been very respectful of me.” Not the day he came to steal his car, thrusting a burning Bible in his face, adds Wilson: “He was just like a wild man.”

In that state of mind, Gargasoulas drove across the city, at times with police on his tail. One pursuit was called off in Yarraville in the interests of safety. With Muo having escaped on Bolte Bridge, just west of the city centre, Gargasoulas sped to the CBD, where he performed burnouts near Flinders Street Station. “When I saw him yelling out the car and out to the public and threatening them, that’s when I knew something was wrong,” said Year 12 student Isaac Tupou, who with his cousin tried to stop the driver by hitting the car with baseball bats. “We both felt we should have done more.”

When police showed up, the Commodore sped down Swanston



A CCTV camera captured the stolen Commodore speeding on the Swanston Street footpath.



First responders were joined by members of the public in assisting the injured.



Gargasoulas was seen doing burnouts at a CBD intersection around 1.30 PM on Jan. 20. “I wish I could have stopped him,” said Tevita Mahina, who hit the car with a baseball bat.

MOTHER’S REGRET
Before the rampage, it is alleged Gargasoulas stabbed his brother, Angelo, at his mother Emily’s public-housing flat and stole a car from neighbour Gavin Wilson. Emily “is totally traumatised by it all,” Wilson tells WHO. “That’s her firstborn son that did that.”



Dimitrios Gargasoulas in a Facebook photo.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: VICTORIA POLICE; GETTY IMAGES; INSTAGRAM.COM; ABC NEWS; GETTY IMAGES; FACEBOOK.COM; NEWSPIX



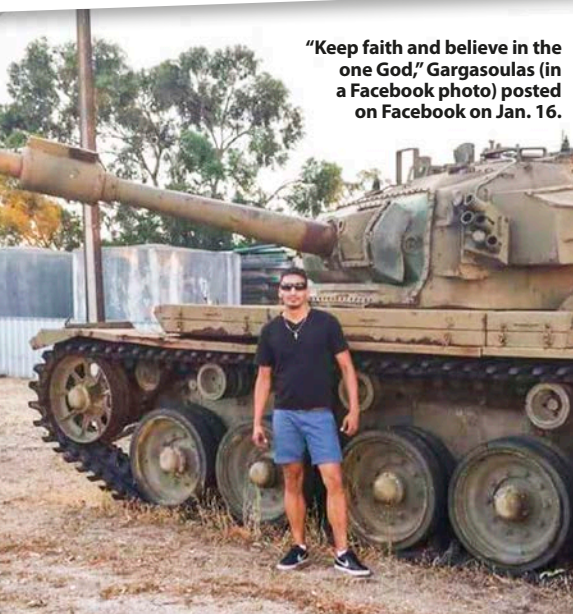
Crowds gathered in Federation Square on Jan. 23. "We wanted to show our support," mourner Hayley Campbell told the ABC.

HEROES & HEARTACHE

Calling it a "sad day" for Australians, Prime Minister Turnbull commended the people who went to the aid of the victims. "We admire and thank the heroism of the first responders," he said. "The bystanders who quickly moved to help those that had been injured."



Turnbull laid flowers in the Melbourne CBD on Jan. 22.



"Keep faith and believe in the one God," Gargasoulas (in a Facebook photo) posted on Facebook on Jan. 16.



Gargasoulas's mother, Emily, said she was "ashamed" of her son.

Street at 70km/h, where it mounted the footpath, forcing terrified pedestrians to flee into shops. "The car was about a metre away from the door as it drove past," Mind Games employee Oliver Vogel-Reed, 19, tells WHO. "A few of the people that ran into our store almost got hit." To his relief, Vogel-Reed then saw police cars follow the sedan. But "there were screams further up the street."

By then, the car had turned left into the Bourke Street Mall, where police say Gargasoulas began intentionally targeting pedestrians. "He was driving by one hand and the other hand resting out the window," says witness Frank Dicle. "People were jumping away." Others weren't so fortunate. "Bodies just went everywhere," witness Gary Oake, who tried to save the life of schoolgirl Thalia, told 3AW. "They just went flying up in the air. [The driver] didn't brake at all, he just kept going." As he did, "People were literally just flying like skittles," Adelaide woman Sian Bayliss, who was visiting Melbourne, told *The Age*, "bouncing off the bonnet and smashing into the shops."

Police opened fire, wounding the driver in the arm, and rammed the vehicle, bringing the reign of terror—and days of erratic behaviour—to an end. "I declare war on tyranny today," Gargasoulas posted on Facebook four days before the massacre. "God bless everyone in the world, it is about to change."

"Bodies just went everywhere"

—witness Gary Oake

In the wake of the madness, there was only compassion and kindness on Melbourne's city streets. Having seen the carnage, Andrew Blain raced down from his Bourke Street office with first-aid supplies and began tending to victims. "There were some pretty gruesome injuries—gauze and bandages weren't going to do much," he told Fairfax. "We needed towels." Bystander Henry Dow praised the efforts of a taxi driver known only as Lou, who coordinated first aid to some, giving "orders at other pedestrians standing by," wrote Dow, who also administered first aid, in a Facebook post. "He directed assistance to several of the victims laying on the pavement, all whilst speaking lovingly to [a female victim]: 'I am Lou, you are going to be OK, we are looking after you.'"

In that same spirit, thousands gathered for a vigil at Melbourne's Federation Square on Jan. 23, where they mourned those lost and prayed for the 15 still in hospital, two of whom were still critical at press time. "Now we ache for those so needlessly lost and for their loved ones," said the governor of Victoria, Linda Dessau. "When nothing can magically ease our pain, at least we can gather together and look after each other."

It was a sentiment echoed by Dow, who also spoke at the vigil: "Many images and sounds will stay with me much longer than I might like, but I'm glad to have seen, and hope I never forget, just how brave and loving strangers can be."

■ By Rachel Syers and Michael Crooks