

The appalling truth about Australia's rape statistics:

<http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/crime/crime-rape-per-capita>

I'll repeat what I said on air about the burka ([or should I say hijab](#)). While on the one hand I agree that although ideally the burka has no place in Australia, we ourselves need to tread very carefully here, for how we act determines who we become. We *could* leap at the opportunity to grab a big stick, act like nazis, and go off on a power trip bossing our moslem brothers around. Or we could take a compassionate approach, read Surah 24:31 and 33:59, and explain to our moslem brothers - "you don't realize how you're coming across in your new country - take anything too far and it turns into its opposite - be *too* modest in the wrong context and you actually look arrogant - but don't worry, you're in a safe country now, you don't have to be afraid in Australia, you can stop hiding, women don't get raped in Australia like the country you come from."

Then I looked up the rape stats and found the link at the top of this page. I felt sick and I still do. I can't believe it. How the hell can anyone in Australia have the gall to presume to dictate to moslem migrants how they can and can't dress, when we have one of the highest rape rates in the world? Shame on you Australia. Every straight man in this goddam country should hang his head in shame. If anyone wants to start acting like a nazi about anything, then might I suggest that taking the crime of rape about a thousand times more seriously is a far better direction to direct those energies, and let the peaceful moslems be. They'll come out on their own accord when they feel safe.

As for the call to reintroduce capital punishment, the problem is that it just doesn't work – wherever there is capital punishment, the murder rates are higher. Whether governments realize it or not, they do lead by unconscious example, and the death penalty sends the basic message: if there's a big problem with a person, you kill them. This filters down from the highest court to the primary school playground. If you're still not convinced, here's the stats. Australia's murder rate is about the same as most European countries and Canada and New Zealand, but double that of Japan, Norway and Ireland. The USA has a rate about four times that of Australia, and countries like China, Russia, Mexico and Croatia have rates much higher again. This is in direct correlation with which countries have the death penalty - i.e. countries with the death penalty have higher murder rates.

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/deterrence-states-without-death-penalty-have-had-consistently-lower-murder-rates>

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4524A092E30E4486CA2569DE00256331>

<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/8509>

[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/l1\\_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB84.pdf/\\$file/CJB84.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/l1_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB84.pdf/$file/CJB84.pdf)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Use\\_of\\_capital\\_punishment\\_by\\_nation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Use_of_capital_punishment_by_nation)

<http://www.moraldilemma.observationdeck.org/?p=88>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital\\_punishment\\_in\\_the\\_People%27s\\_Republic\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment_in_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China)

<http://www.teachabroadchina.com/china-death-penalty-capital-punishment/>

<http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/crime/crime-murders>

## Postscript 2012

In the above blog post I made in 2009, I cited the statistic that Australia had the third-worst rape rate in the world, based on the information on this website:

<http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/crime/crime-rape-per-capita>

I've just re-checked that link, and to my surprise, Australia, far from being listed third, does not even appear on the list of the highest 50 rape rates in the world now. The ranking three years ago was #1 South Africa, #2 Madagascar, #3 Australia. Now the list reads #1 Lesotho (an African country bordering on South Africa), #2 New Zealand, #3 Belgium.

It's difficult to believe that things have changed all that much in Australia in the past few years, so I guess the lesson here is that statistics are slippery things, and that no one source of data can be uncritically assumed to tell the whole story (although [Nationmaster](#) do seem to be a reliable source of data). In any case, Australia is still #5 on this list:

<http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/crime/crime-rape-victims>

and this page cites the rape rate as 1% of the population:

<http://www.nationmaster.com/country/as-australia/crime>

With a [population](#) as of today of 22,767,000 (ish) this would mean that there are around 227,670 rapes in Australia annually – somewhere around 600 a day – an unbelievable number.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics website has the figures from police reports on this page indicating the actual figure might be about one quarter of this number:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4530.0Main+Features32010-11>

In the 12 months 2009-2010, there were 54,900 crimes of sexual assault recorded by the police in Australia – a much lower figure, but still an appalling 150 a day.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/statistics.html>

is a relevant government site, which cites a figure of 76 per 100,000 for reported sexual assault.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2D8A0E67E40926FECA257A150018FACA?opendocument>

This gives an annual figure of 17,303 – about 48 a day.

This latter figure means that 76 of the 100,000 women in that study had been raped, and any extrapolation from that small sample is not reliably quantifiable. But the police reports speak for themselves, at a rate of 150 a day. The discrepancy between this number and the 600 a day figure which Nationmaster glean from United Nations reports is, however, explained by another result of that survey of 100,000 Australian women in 1995, and I quote, “Only 15% of women who identified an incident of sexual assault in the 12 months prior to the survey reported to police.”

Rape is a very seriously under-reported crime - this study even indicates that as many as 85% of all rapes are going unreported. Thus the disparity between the figures of 150 and 600 per day. Of course it is impossible to quantify exactly how under-reported rapes actually are, but even a conservative estimate would have to admit that at least half of all rapes go unreported, and so we can safely conclude that there are between 300 and 600 rapes per day on average in Australia. And that same study also reported that: “An estimated 1.2 million women in Australia aged 18 and over had experienced sexual violence or its threat since the age of 15. More specifically, one in six adult women in Australia had experienced sexual assault since the age of 15 years.”

As I said, straight Australian manhood ought to hang its collective head in shame, and not shy away from asking itself fair and square: *what the hell?*

How can this be who we are?

And how can we change it?

These sorts of sentiments were focussed upon the recent horrible crime resulting in the murder of ABC radio staff member Jill Meagher. The groundswell of public outcry was moving, heartfelt and in its own way heart-warming, but ultimately such rallies are unable to alter the knot of

contradictions at the root of sexually violent crime, and serve largely to engineer a sense in those who took part *that they have done something*. I don't pretend to have any simple answers to what actually needs to be done to stop the dozens of rapes which take place every day in Australia, but I will say to all those who called Jill Meagher's death a tragedy are I think misusing the word 'tragedy,' and thereby misunderstanding the nature of the problem. The thing about tragedy is its *inevitability* – stars get crossed, and worlds collide, and cultures clash, and all that sort of thing, and our heroes' fates are doomed from the outset, as we watch the tragic drama unfold in its inexorability. In the tragic genre of the theatre, audiences squirm in their seats because they can see the disaster coming long before the characters in the play can, and by the time the characters realise what's going on, it's too late to avoid catastrophe. From Antigone being torn between the obligation of obedience and the filial love for her brother, to Romeo and Juliet pretending that tradition doesn't apply to them, individuals die in tragedies with the slow inexorability of the proverbial maiden tied to the train tracks.

But this is not how Jill Meagher died. Her death was not a tragedy, because Jill Meagher didn't *have* to die. Jill Meagher's death was a **crime**, and an important part of the pain that every right minded human being feels when they think of this crime is the knowledge of just how unnecessary her murder was. It serves no higher purpose, achieves nothing, and manifests no moral lessons. It is just stupid, and that's part of why it's so galling. Why I'm bothering to split hairs about the use of the word “tragedy” here is because when we use that word, we sigh and say sadly “there was nothing anyone could do,” and we feel that sad feeling and we resign ourselves to how hard and cruel and unfair the world is. But when we call this murder what it actually is – **a crime** – we immediately drop everything and think “something must be done.” And that I think is the right feeling to be having, the feeling of an urgent need for action, and not one of resignation. And what that action turns out to be decides what kind of people we are.

John Faine on 774am clearly felt a bit uneasy about pressing on with the day's scheduled sporting extravaganza. But he said that Jill would have wanted 774 to get on with the show, and that that was what he was going to do. Now I think that this is a flawed logic. What Jill wanted did not factor into this crime, and I do not believe that speculation concerning what she would have wanted should guide what action we undertake in response to this outrage upon the public mind. Just quietly I suspect John Faine was rationalizing, because nothing short of armageddon was going to distract him from the football Grand Final, and he seemed to feel a little uneasy about this very fact. My respectful suggestion is that this unease is due to his misunderstanding this appalling event as a tragedy, with the implicit assumption that there's nothing we can do.

Now imagine that through some accident, 110,000 people (that's twice the 55,000 reported rapes, to cover a 50% unreported rate) were killed – that's about the size of the crowd at the Grand Final. It would be a national emergency. Everything would stop, except essential services, while we dealt with this unprecedented disaster. But who stops to think : ***that many women get raped in Australia every year***. The distracting power of sport is so powerful that it is indeed an opiate of the masses, and the massive pain of this murder would seem to call for a solid dose of painkiller, it's true. But this is not a tragedy against which we can only anaesthetize ourselves. It is a crime of monstrous proportions, and when a crime of monstrous proportions occurs, our duty is drop everything and act. So what ought our action to be? Our inner barbarian calls out for revenge upon its perpetrator, reaching for the lynch mob's rope. But our outer civilised human knows that any such base act would only drag us back down to the murderer's own level, and so we as a whole sublimate this desire for revenge into a desire to cure our society of the malaise of rape. I don't pretend to know how to do that. But I do know that denial is not the answer, that this is something we must start thinking about publicly.

Number one: the removal of this page from wikipedia is an outrage:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Australian\\_rules\\_football\\_incidents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Australian_rules_football_incidents)

I wish I had copied the contents of that page before it was removed – it was a list of all the rapes perpetrated by AFL footballers. I hope John Faine stopped and thought for just a moment at some point during The Grand Final : it is a statistical certainty that there are rapists who have gotten away with it in the grandstands, and a statistical probability that at least one of them is running around on the field. And most importantly of all : Australia's rape victims for just one year would fill this grandstand. Jill Meagher's murder was a horrible crime, but we're fooling ourselves if we think of it as an isolated incident. Why is her death alone reported *ad maximum*, while the couple of hundred rapes that also happened that week were ignored, and all that valuable airtime devoted instead to sport?