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July 12, 2025

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Former Melbourne man Daniel Luria is leading the eviction of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, house by house, block by block.

INSIGHT

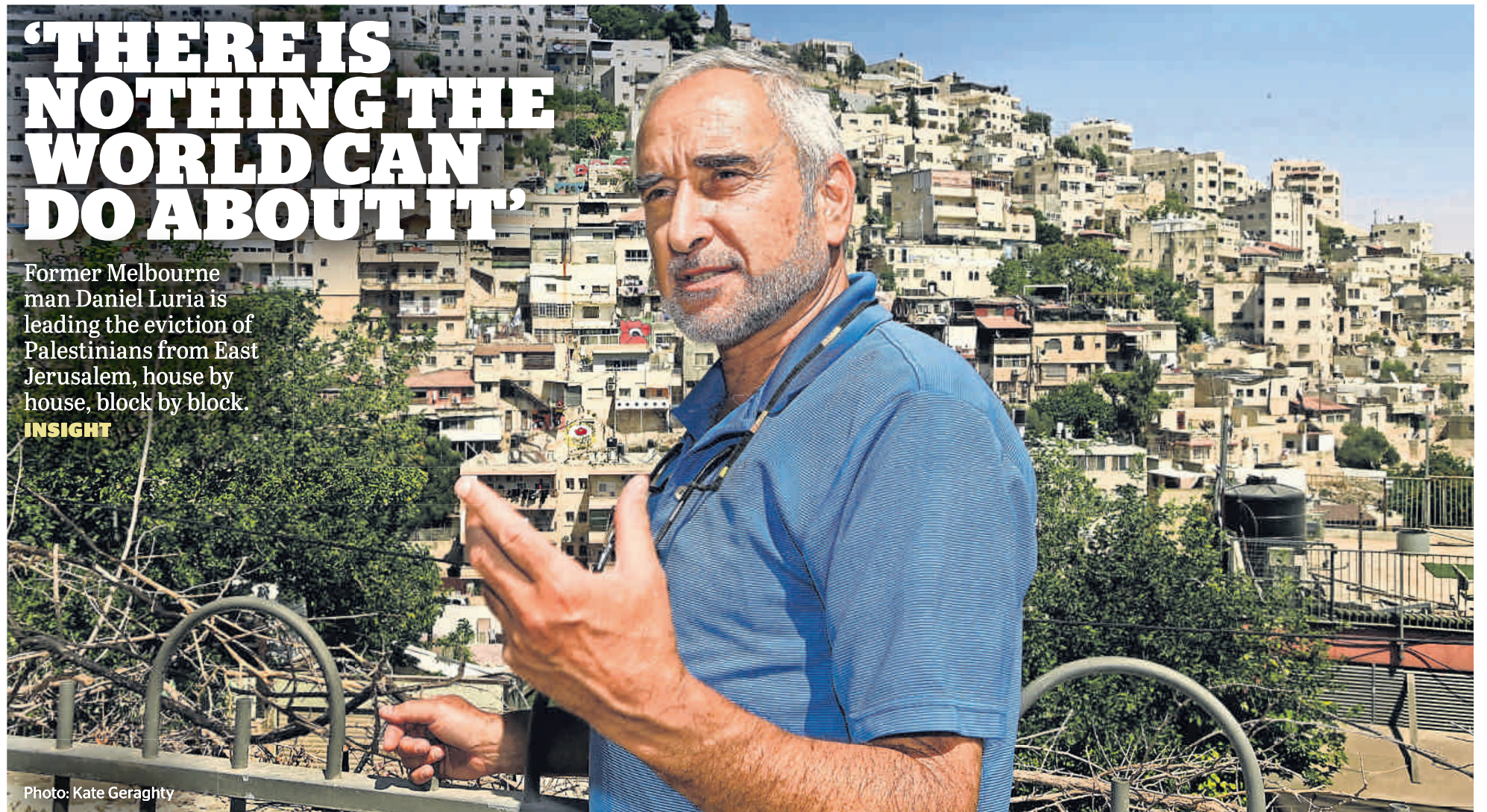


Photo: Kate Geraghty

Elderly driver review flagged after fatal crash

Patrick Hatch
Transport reporter

Victoria will consider stricter rules to ensure elderly motorists are fit to drive after a 91-year-old was involved in a crash that killed a woman and seriously injured a toddler and a man in Melbourne's east on Thursday.

Police say the woman lost control of her Toyota Yaris and veered onto the footpath for about 200 metres along Coleman Road in Wantirna South, hitting a toddler and his grandparents.

A 59-year-old woman died at the scene. A 60-year-old man re-

mained in hospital in a critical condition yesterday, while a two-year-old boy was in hospital in a stable condition.

No charges have been laid over the crash.

Acting Premier Ben Carroll said yesterday there was a "valid question" over whether Victoria should follow some other states and make fitness-to-drive tests for older drivers mandatory.

"There are a range of initiatives in place ... through our general practitioners right around Victoria when it comes to making sure that Victorians continue to get tested for their driver's licence,"



TRIBUTES FOR WANTIRNA VICTIMS
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he said. "But I think [there is] no doubt this tragedy has brought it into focus." Carroll said the government would consider whether the rules needed changing after the crash had been investigated.

According to police, 164 people have been killed by road crashes in Victoria so far this year. That is an average of six deaths every week, and 15 more deaths than this time last year.

NSW, Queensland and Western Australia require drivers aged 75 and older to undergo an annual medical assessment to keep their licences.

NSW also requires motorists aged 85 and above to undergo a practical driving assessment every two years to maintain an unrestricted licence.

Associate Professor Sjaan
Continued Page 2



Lorraine Moss, Erin Patterson and Lana Clayton took lives using poison.

Profile of a poisoner

Joni Johnston, a US forensic psychologist, is no stranger to poisoners. She has spent a large part of her storied career researching and interviewing these types of killers, and can list their common traits like items on a grocery list: They are likely to come from a medical background, their victims are likely to be family members, and they are often motivated by revenge or financial gain.

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GOOD WEEKEND



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INSIDE



STAN GRANT, ACTOR

For one night only, in ECHO

SPECTRUM



METAGE A001



Erin Patterson was found guilty on Monday of murdering three people and attempting to murder another with death cap mushroom-laced beef Wellingtons. Photo: Jason South

What drives a person to poison

Carla Jaeger

Joni Johnston, a US forensic psychologist, is no stranger to poisoners. She has spent a large part of her storied career researching and interviewing these types of killers, and can list their common traits like items on a grocery list: They are likely to come from a medical background, their victims are likely to be family members, and they are often motivated by revenge or financial gain.

And yet, despite her years of research, Johnston is frequently baffled by the way these types of killers can behave after committing their crime.

She has encountered several cases of poisoners who were “so sneaky” they could have gotten away with murder – if not for how they behaved after the act.

“I see it over and over and over again ... What I would say is, if you’re not a career criminal, if you’re not somebody who is anti-social by nature, or grew up committing crimes – it does require a mental process to get to the point where you decide to murder someone,” Johnston says.

Erin Patterson did not get away with her crime. The 50-year-old was found guilty this week of murdering her in-laws, Don and Gail Patterson, and Gail’s sister, Heather Wilkinson, and attempting to murder Heather’s husband, Ian, by serving the elderly group a home-cooked lunch laced with death cap mushrooms in July 2023.

Patterson’s behaviour after the deadly lunch was a point of focus for the prosecution during her trial. The prosecution took the jury through

the key moments that they said proved Patterson’s guilt: leaving the hospital against medical advice, throwing away a food dehydrator and factory-resetting her phone.

“They [poisoners] think up to when the murder happens, and then there’s not a lot of thought about, ‘How am I going to handle this afterwards?’,” Johnston says.

Johnston recalls a case in the US where a man aroused suspicion after he moved his mistress into the family home days after his wife’s sudden death. He was later convicted of poisoning his wife.

There was also the death of Steve Clayton. It was initially believed the South Carolina man died of a heart attack – until Clayton’s family noticed how oddly his wife, Lana, behaved in the days after his death. Investigators later discovered she had poisoned his drinking water, killing the 64-year-old.

Now, after one of the most closely watched murder trials in Australian history concluded this week, experts like Johnston are left to dissect how the mother of two fits in with the typical profile of a poisoner, and why the case garnered such frenzied, global interest.

The first point Johnston is keen to clear up is a common misconception – that more women poison than men. “There are all kinds of stereotypes about women that have lasted throughout eternity,” she says. “One of them is that women are more devious ... They don’t beat you up, they don’t hit you, they just poison your food. Given the fact that 90 per cent of all murderers – at least in the US – are men, there are going to be more male poisoners than female.”

While it’s not a perfect science, Johnston says research has indicated trends in what kind of people poisoners tend to be. “They tend to be less confrontational, they tend to express their anger more indirectly, they tend to be kind of sneakier,” she says.

They are also unlikely to be career criminals; Patterson had a clean record.

Poisoners are planners by necessity, but some can derive a sense of pleasure or interest in the planning process.

“What situation can you imagine where you don’t have to plan poisoning somebody?” Johnston says. “You have to get the poison. You have to administer it, even if you have it in your house.”



Bendigo woman Lorraine Moss and her husband John, and the container she used to poison him with arsenic and lead over many years.

Patterson fits the bill as a fastidious planner. Evidence presented during the 11-week murder trial suggested a high level of planning. A year before the fatal lunch, she researched death cap mushroom sightings in the area and practised hiding dried mushrooms in her children’s food.

Johnston says: “How angry they are can determine how much pleasure they get out of the planning process, because when you think about poisoning, especially [in instances where the victim is poisoned over a period of time] there’s a sadistic part of that.”

The elaborate planning is likely to cost Patterson a lenient sentence as the judge deliberates the length of her imprisonment.



When choosing a poison to administer, the murderer often turns to something that can be acquired without difficulty.

Johnston points to a case, also in the US, where a veterinarian murdered her husband with animal tranquiliser. There have been a few cases in which doctors have used colchicine, a medicine used to treat gout, to murder their victims.

Patterson, a former council worker who was a homemaker at the time of her crimes, joins a long list of women who have used food to administer their poison. Johnston says this again comes back to accessibility – the women’s role in the home, especially historically, was to cook. “If you wanted to get rid of somebody, then you had some opportunity as a caretaker or as a food provider,” she says.

Bendigo woman Lorraine Moss slowly poisoned her husband, Johnny Moss, to death by covertly feeding him large quantities of arsenic and lead over a number of years. After years of symptoms that baffled doctors, he died a slow and excruciating death. Moss borrowed books about poison and was seen to be highly calculated; the homicide detective who charged her said it was a case of “cold-blooded torture” – although she was always polite to the police.

Why Patterson captured the world’s attention

Patterson is not the only person in Australia currently accused of crimes involving poison, but few cases have captured the public’s attention quite like Patterson’s fatal beef Wellington lunch. Journalists, podcasters and film crews

‘They tend to be less confrontational, they tend to express their anger more indirectly, they tend to be kind of sneakier.’

Joni Johnston, forensic psychologist

descended on the little town of Leongatha in the aftermath of the deaths; during the trial in nearby Morwell, true crime buffs queued in the rain outside the court for hours to get a seat inside. There were daily news bulletins, live blogs and YouTube channels.

Criminologist Kathryn Whiteley says the interest in the case is threefold. The first is the theatrical nature of the crime, almost Shakespearean in its spectacle. The second is the number of victims – mass killers are rare. And rarer still are female killers.

Men are overwhelmingly responsible for Australia’s homicides. Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology between July 2023 and June 2024 found women committed just 13 per cent of homicides during that time. Whiteley says this statistic is consistent across the Western world, where women account for about 10 per cent of murders.

“Generally speaking, we as a society conceptualise a woman’s traditional values with nurturer, carer, the gentler sex,” Whiteley says. “The notion that a woman can give life to a human being and then violently take another challenges societal norms of womanhood. It shocks our societal psyche.”

But why do women kill less than men? This is a challenging question to answer, Whiteley says. Research suggests biological differences can play a role, as well as gendered societal norms.

“Testosterone in males is equated to higher impulsivity and low frustration tolerance. It’s thought with women’s progesterone, there exists more placidity and compliance,” she says. “When a male’s goals are blocked, they may become frustrated and angry, which can lead to violent behaviour. Women, on the other hand, have traditionally been taught to talk through their frustration and anger, or as many women do, internalise it. Women’s aggression is far more relational or indirect, rarely physical.”

Whiteley, whose research focuses on the portrayals of women who kill, spent months interviewing seven women convicted of murder at Dame Phyllis Frost prison – the prison in which Patterson will serve her sentence. She says the interest is typical of any case when the offender is female.

“Women receive far more media coverage, no matter the platform ... Women are relegated by media with common, often more damning adjectives.”

One of those damning assessments of Patterson has been her “crocodile tears”. The accused often wept during her eight-day testimony, but reporters in the courtroom observed no genuine tears forming and the tissues she pressed to her face were dry.

The scene echoed Patterson’s first public interview in August 2023, when the 50-year-old pleaded her innocence to journalists outside her Leongatha home a week after hosting the fatal lunch.

Observing Patterson’s body language in the video, Whiteley noted the way she would wipe her

tears. “It appeared almost forced, with exaggerated hand gestures on and around her face; by wiping her face, her eyes, to show that she was emotionally upset, reflecting the overall personal impact this tragic event has on her now.”

This does not necessarily indicate guilt – Whiteley has spoken to many women convicted of murder whose eyes will well, but tears won’t fall. “Many continue to put on a ‘brave’ facade because they do not want to let their guard down, as this can appear to society as a sign of personal weakness,” she says.

When Patterson was first confronted by reporters on that Monday in August, Whiteley observed the mother of two appearing slightly emotional but willing to talk about her relationships with her lunch guests.

“Within minutes after being further provoked to answer questions by journalists who wanted more specific information about the crime itself, she appears traumatised, more emotionally unsettled, and keeps repeating, referring back to a similar, themed message.

“Some may suggest in these later instances, where Erin continues to provide almost the same narrative response to the journalists, there is an emotional disconnect between the question being pursued and what she answers – almost like a rehearsal.”

Interestingly to Whiteley: “She doesn’t appear to sincerely, genuinely apologise for having cooked the lunch, which made them ill.”

For Johnston, her interest in the case was piqued not by the gender of the offender, but rather the scale of the crime.

“The thing that struck me the most is why would you kill all of these people?” she says. “The extreme nature of that, I do think she really did end up, in her mind, blaming this whole family for the deterioration of her marriage, and felt like they mistreated her in some way. And that became an obsession or focus for her.”

This was a narrative the prosecution put forward during the case. The jury heard that a Facebook account linked to Erin Patterson sent messages to a chat group saying her estranged husband was a “deadbeat” father and his parents were “a lost cause”.

The other puzzling detail for Johnston was a seeming lack of financial motivation, something she says is often the motivator in similar cases. “There was something about money [but it wasn’t central to the case] ... for her, I could see money becoming somewhat symbolic, whether she needed it or not.”

Whiteley’s interest has turned to Patterson’s mental state on July 29, 2023: “One does consider what was Erin feeling emotionally, as she prepared the lunch on that day and served the food to her family members.

“Did she – or does she – feel sincere remorse, bewilderment with the knowledge of her family dying from the meal she provided, or a callous sense of relief, if her agenda was revenge?”

Underworld issues warning with Bali hit, Melbourne firebomb

Sherryn Groch, Amilia Rosa and Sally Rawsthorne

When Melbourne’s gangland wars reached the usually quiet streets of Bali last month, even crime figures back home were surprised.

Zivan “Stipe” Radmanovic, 32, had been on the holiday island just two days when he was shot dead by helmeted intruders in the middle of the night, as his terrified wife, Jazmyn Gourdeas, hid under the covers in their luxury villa.

Another Melbourne man, 34-year-old Sanar Ghanim, was shot in the leg and beaten in the targeted attack – but survived. Ghanim is the former partner of Danielle Stephens, the stepdaughter of slain underworld boss Carl Williams.

After a manhunt unfolded, three Australians were nabbed by border officials and charged with Radmanovic’s murder.

Ever since, Bali investigators – and diplomats from Australia – have been scrambling to piece together how a clutch of Australians far from home came to be at the centre of one of the most violent gangland shootings in Bali’s history.

Then on Thursday night in Melbourne, after Ghanim returned home from Bali, his partner’s South Yarra cosmetic business was firebombed. No one was inside at the time, but the building was gutted. Victoria Police say they believe the attack “was targeted and will investigate any potential links to any other incidents”.

Sources close to both the investigation in Bali and gangland figures in Australia say the warning to Ghanim is now clear.

None of the Australians caught up in the Bali shooting appear to be major players in the underworld back home, though multiple sources, who requested anonymity to speak freely, say an unpaid gangland debt running into the millions of dollars was involved.

The brazenness of the attack, in a country known for the death penalty, has some worried that violence is escalating as syndicates increasingly “outsource” jobs to inexperienced guns for hire.

Bali police have said the attack was targeted and planned, with others “likely” involved in Australia, but they have yet to determine if Radmanovic was the intended target or the victim of a botched hit.

The Australians arrested, whose identities were first revealed by *The Age*, are believed to be a crew of small-time crooks hired for the alleged murder. They now face the death penalty.

Radmanovic, remembered as a devoted father of six, was not a known figure in the underworld, according to sources close to him and the investigation. He knew Ghanim through their partners, who are sisters. “Now they’ll chase you to the ends of the Earth,” a source said. “But even then, they might shoot the wrong guy.”

Others believe both the hit and

the firebombing appear to have been a warning for Ghanim, who shares a child with Carl William’s daughter.

Speaking to Bali police in recent weeks, Ghanim had told investigators he couldn’t identify his attackers and he was planning a covert return to Melbourne, according to a source close to the investigation. His partner, Danielle Gourdeas, who also witnessed the shooting and owned the beauty shop torched in South Yarra, had already returned to Melbourne, as had her sister with Radmanovic’s body.

Ghanim is a former kickboxer with underworld associates who had been living in Bali since at least last year as he set up the villa complex where the group were ambushed in June. The roads out there are still dirt, and the other completed villas were reportedly empty when the shooting took place.

More than a decade ago in Melbourne, Ghanim served jail time for his involvement in two non-fatal shootings, as well as drug offences.

Radmanovic and his wife, Jazmyn Gourdeas, had arrived in Bali on

local courts and result in a non-custodial sentence.

A source close to the Bali case said Ghanim and the Gourdeas sisters told detectives they never saw their attackers’ faces.

The men came in the middle of the night, and Ghanim said he had protected himself by tucking his head down into a kickboxing stance. As Ghanim called for help with a gunshot wound in the leg and the attackers fled, Jazmyn crept out of bed to check her husband’s pulse.

“I visited the crime scene a few days after to collect personal belongings for Jazmyn, and the villa was intact, it wasn’t ransacked,” the source said. There were no signs of a robbery, but “blood was everywhere”. “On the floor, in the bathroom, the mirror glass was broken from the bullets.”

The attack in Indonesia has not only shaken the surviving Australians but sent ripples through the underworld back home.

Most Australian crime bosses now call the shots from apparent safety overseas. Popular



Sanar Ghanim’s partner Danielle Gourdeas’ South Yarra cosmetic business was firebombed on Thursday night. Photo: Paul Jeffers

June 12 and planned to stay just five days with her sister and Ghanim to celebrate Jazmyn’s 30th birthday.

“I don’t know who [would want my husband dead],” she told Bali police, according to her lawyers.

His accused killers had been in Bali well before he arrived, Bali police say, planning the attack.

They allege one of the accused – 27-year-old Sydney plumber Darcy Jenson – set up the hit, having been in Bali since April and, as *The Age* revealed, appearing to stake out the area near the crime scene almost two weeks before the attack.

Police retracing the steps of the accused trio allege Jenson rented the cars and bikes used in the attack and waited outside as convicted drug dealer Mevlut Coskun, 23, and Paea I Middlemore Tupou, 26, shot Radmanovic and Ghanim.

Sydneysiders from birth, neither Jenson nor Coskun were well-known in the Harbour City’s underworld. Both had criminal convictions – Jenson for minor traffic offences and Coskun for drug supply and dealing with the proceeds of crime, although this was small-time enough to stay in the

destinations for gangsters in exile include Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Thailand. But for some, the shooting in Bali, in a country with the death penalty, means an alarming escalation.

“It’s just the start, now you can have someone killed overseas, even there,” a gangland source said. “Soon they won’t use Aussies for the jobs, they’ll use cheap local alternatives.”

The Australian Federal Police did not answer questions on whether Indonesia had requested its co-operation in the case or their own investigations onshore, but has said no one had been arrested in Australia over the Bali ambush.

Victoria Police did not say whether they were investigating local connections or any fallout related to the Bali shooting, and referred questions to the AFP.

The Australian government has been providing consular assistance to the Australian men since their arrest and seeking briefings from Indonesian counterparts, as Foreign Minister Penny Wong reiterates Australia’s opposition to the death penalty.

With Cameron Houston

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