

STATEMENT

Dr Judy Lattas of Macquarie University was misrepresented in *The Observer*, Sunday October 1, 2006, when quoted in the report by Phil Mercer “Sydney warned more beach riots are likely”. Dr Lattas requested and was granted a correction from the Readers’ Editor, which she acknowledges with thanks here. In this statement, Dr Lattas clarifies her position for Macquarie University’s Research Centre for Social Inclusion. Dr Lattas presented a paper to the Everyday Multiculturalism conference, hosted by the Centre 28-29 September 2006.

My comments in the *Observer* report “Sydney warned more beach riots are likely” were taken out of context. My view that substantive issues still needed to be addressed at Cronulla was seriously distorted into the kind of anti-Arab scare-mongering that I clearly reject in all my writing. This kind of reporting, which does not seek to understand the situation but only sensationalises it, is part of the problem. What was left out of the report was my crucial point that young men of Middle Eastern background have a strong sense of being rejected by mainstream Australian culture. This is played out repeatedly in the attempt to pick up ‘Aussie’ women on the beach. My general point was that the ethnic tensions at Cronulla are played out in everyday gender interactions.

The young women I spoke with at Cronulla were keen to point out that all kinds of men in Australia engage in sexual harassment. The incidents involving these groups of young men, however, were distinctive in their defensive-aggressive intensity. In my analysis of these incidents, I argue that there is no simple way of saying who has more power in gender relations that involve disadvantaged men and privileged women. These relations need to be addressed carefully and fairly, if we are to avert further confrontations. Most importantly, young men of Middle Eastern background need to feel included in Australian culture.

I am currently preparing the papers that I have presented on my ethnography for publication. When this is achieved, publication details will appear here so that a full account of my work becomes available. In the meantime, I invite respectful debate of these issues by email exchange.

Dr Judy Lattas, Director of the Institute for Women’s Studies, Macquarie University,
jlattas@scmp.mq.edu.au