

# Australia's Wieambilla Killings: The Sense Behind Senseless Murder

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*The contradiction behind the messages is clear. This was a "sophisticated" operation involving surveillance. It was planned. Those unfortunate police officers were lured to an isolated Queensland property where they were "executed". The details were initially sketchy, but that did not prevent the general sentiment from simmering away: this was, in the words of a [statement](#) by the Queensland Police Union, a "senseless murder of colleagues". That account has been trotted out with unanimity.*

It began as an inquiry about a missing person, involving four officers from Tara sent to a Wieambilla property in the Western Downs region, some 270km west of the Queensland capital, Brisbane. According to Ian Leavers, President of the Queensland Police Union, two officers, constables Rachel McCrow and Matthew Arnold, [were shot](#) on arrival around 4.45pm in "a ruthless, calculated and targeted execution of our colleagues". Of the two remaining officers, one was wounded, while the other escaped. A neighbour, Alan Dare, going in to assist, was also killed.

The three individuals accused of perpetrating the shootings were brothers Nathaniel and Gareth Train, and Gareth's wife Stacey Train. They were subsequently killed by specialist police forces at the site.

Murder, in many instances, is filled with sense and planning. As disturbing it may well be, an intention to kill can conform to a set of presumptions that make sense within a particular world view. That view is often alloyed by a number of disturbing influences, the contaminant that sets the fuse.

To that end, it would be appropriate to investigate what the motivations of these figures are. But efforts to do so have been uneven. Media outlets have not held back in portraying the individuals as members of the mad, the deranged, the delusional. These cloddish efforts do little to illuminate and much to obfuscate.

The quest to not understand has been aided by the conspiracy label attached to the three

individuals. Gareth Train, for one, [believed](#) that the 1996 Port Arthur massacre had been a false-flag operation; tactical police had set out to target “conspiracy talkers” and “truthers”. He also had a YouTube channel, since deleted, replete with posts covering conspiracies on COVID, anti-vaccination and the sovereign citizen movement. That same channel featured [footage](#) from Gareth and Stacey Train showing the prelude to the attack, including coverage of the shootings.

An ABC [investigative report](#) into the background of the trio noted, among other things, the conduct of Gareth and Tracey on their move in 2011 to the small town of Camooweal, about 13km from the Northern Territory border in far west Queensland. “We were invited to tea at their house,” noted a resident, who noticed “their pig dogs inside the house in cages” and Gareth’s “big collection of hunting knives and he then told us he was a social worker.”

Gareth, the accounts note, had a certain lust for blood. “Sometimes we would see Gareth with his knives running around with dogs chasing the pigs,” another resident stated. Given the ecstasy shown by many an Australian in massacring “feral” invasive species, not to mention the occasional native one, this crude behaviour is hardly eyebrow raising. But this is Gareth, the cop killer, so all must be exceptional and unusual in his universe.

A closer reading of such accounts suggests that what the Trains did was less a case of being remarkable than the fact it was done so openly. Slaughtering animals is all good, but do not do it in front of children. Paul (not his real name) [recalled](#) how Gareth would “butcher” the pigs and hang the carcasses facing the local school. “There would be a smell of offal and blood running onto the footy field.”

Using the analytical template for the standard nutter and the unhinged lunatic, interest focused on Gareth Train’s views expressed on fora dedicated to conspiracies and survivalism. “I currently live on my rural property in western Queensland were [sic] I have been building an ‘ark’[,] homesteading for the last five years preparing to survive tomorrow. I am not interested in indoctrinating or convincing anyone of anything.”

The last line is worth recalling but has gotten lost in the speculative literature warning about rampaging conspiracy theorists willing to tear their way through the security and law enforcement establishment. It’s easy to forget that the survivalist, conspiracy tribe seeking arks and sanctuaries from impending cataclysm is a large one. It [includes](#) a good number of terrified billionaires, among them the libertarian Peter Thiel, who hopes to set up shop in New Zealand when calamity strikes.

Nicholas Evans, an academic in policing and emergency management, [illustrates](#) the fear of his colleagues: “[t]he killings are the clearest example of what security, policing researchers, and law enforcement have warned of – conspiracy beliefs can be motivators for actual or attempted violence against specific people, places and organisations.”

In the saturation of grief, the police have been less than forthcoming about why they sent junior officers to this particular property in the first place. Queensland Police Service commissioner Katarina Carroll [conceded](#) she did not have the “full extent of information” about the Trains.

The Queensland Police have resolutely refused to answer questions about whether officers had made a prior visit to the property, or the extent of knowledge about the shooters.

The now deleted YouTube channel features videos suggesting a history with authorities, expressed through paranoid language. And as with much in the way of paranoia, kernels of veracity might be picked. “You attempt to abduct us using contractors,” [goes one caption](#). “You attempt to intimidate and target us with your Raytheon Learjets and planes. You sent ‘covert’ assets out here to my place in the bush. So what is your play here? To have me and my wife murdered during a state police ‘welfare check’? You already tried that one.”

Gareth’s brother Nathaniel was also one who came across the police radar, [having driven a 4WD packed with loaded guns and military knives](#) through a New South Wales border gate into Queensland last December. This was in breach of COVID-19 regulations. Nathaniel was subsequently found disposing of some of the items in a creek near the Queensland town of Talwood, an incident reported to police. The fact that these included three loaded firearms might have struck law enforcement as odd.

On Radio National on December 21, the Queensland Police Union again reiterated the view that there was no credence to claims that police had made a previous visit to the property. Instead of discussing such details, Leavers has [something else in mind](#): purchasing the property of the shooters in Wieambilla, rendering the profane sacred.

This macabre object has a broader purpose: “The last thing we want to see is the anti-vaxxers, pro-gun, conspiracy theorists to get this land and use it for their own warped and dangerous views.” Comprehending or even seeking to understand such individuals was simply intolerable. “They are absolutely un-Australian and I don’t want it to be used for them to promote themselves.” Let ignorance reign so that others may live happily.

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