

## **Some reported cases (mostly recent) of domestic violence by a female perpetrator resulting in attempted or actual homicide**

Shown below is a selection of (mostly recent) cases reported in the press in Australia of domestic violence by a female perpetrator resulting in attempted or actual homicide. Summary as follows:

- Mother took baby on fatal bridge leap from Melbourne's West Gate bridge (Gabriela Garcia)
- Baby boy shaken to death by addict mother (unnamed female perpetrator)
- Young mother faces baby murder charge after baby injured in fight between parents (unnamed female perpetrator)
- Woman who allegedly tried to poison her child and husband by lacing their mashed potato with crushed sleeping pills faces Brisbane court (unnamed female perpetrator)
- Twin seven-month old babies found dead (suspected female perpetrator)
- Fresh trial for Melbourne mother convicted of murdering her two sons and sentenced to 24 years in a secure psychiatric facility (Donna Fitchett)
- Babysitter charged with murdering a four-year-old boy during a sleep over in Hobart (Fiona Garth)
- Woman charged with murder for stabbing her boyfriend to death on Christmas Day (Tamie Melehan)
- Man whose wife allegedly torched his genitals while he slept has died (Rajini Narayan)
- Sydney woman accused of stabbing murder of her husband was "prone to aggressive outbursts" (Danielle Stewart)
- Woman left mother to be eaten alive by maggots (Eve Pyrcsak)
- Woman cut off part of the penis of an 81-year old World War II veteran as she coldheartedly tortured him to death (Nese Arkan)

- Former abattoir worker used her boning skills to dismember her husband's body and cook parts of it in the kitchen of the home they had shared (Katherine Knight)
- Woman shot her former lover and dismembered his body at the couple's Lilyfield unit (Kathy Yeo)
- Revesby woman admitted shooting her husband, chopping up his body with an axe, and leaving his body parts at locations across NSW (Joyce Mary Chant)
- Woman conspired with her alleged lover to murder her husband - shot with his own gun at his farm near Parkes (Andrea Rix)
- Woman "seemed possessed", killed her father by restraining him to his bed with cling wrap and suffocating him with a pillow (Daniela Beltrame)

Details of these cases, as described in the Press, as follows:

### **Mother took baby on fatal bridge leap – Gabriela Garcia**

*The Australian, 2 July 2009*

*by Milanda Rout*

"A mother strapped her 22-month-old son to her chest in a Baby Bjorn carrier, put a bandage on the infant's face to cover his eyes, used a milk crate to climb on to the railing of Melbourne's West Gate Bridge and then jumped to their deaths.

"A Victorian coroner yesterday found that baby Oliver Garcia died from multiple injuries after his mother, Gabriela Garcia, jumped from the bridge on June 4 last year. In what he called a 'tragic case', Coroner John Olle said Ms Garcia had been exhibiting "erratic behaviour" in her final weeks of life and mistakenly believed she would lose custody of her child. Ms Garcia ended her life, and the life of her 22-month-old son, Oliver, fearing she would lose an imminent custody application,' he wrote. There is, however, no evidence a custody proceeding was planned. Oliver's father denied an intention to apply for custody.

"Mr Olle found the 36-year-old woman had no history of mental illness."

### **Shaken to death by addict mother - unnamed female perpetrator**

*by Angela Kamper and Lisa Davies a*

*Daily Telegraph, 4 July 2009*

"... He just doesn't f...ing stop crying, he just doesn't f...ng shut up,' the 26-year-old told a visitor before she picked up her child and violently shook him up and down. 'I should buy you a f...ng skirt,' she shouted at the nine week-old boy.

“The mother, from Belmont in Newcastle, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, was jailed for six years in the New South Wales District Court yesterday.

“The neighbour who recalled the horrific details to police said the shaking made her ‘jump out’ of the chair and grab the child, whose eyes had rolled up as he tried to draw his knees up to his chest. Three days after the shaking on February 3, 2007, the infant stopped breathing and was rushed to John Hunter Hospital where medical experts agreed the child suffered ‘a violent shake episode and had substantial bleeding in his brain’.

“The mother already had two daughters aged six and eight taken away as infants by the Department of Community Services and put in the care of their grandparents Judge Brian Knox told the court what occurred ‘was the killing of a nine week-old baby by his drug addicted mum’. ‘It is clear that she acted angrily and, using her comments, that she ‘lost it’, he said’“.

## **Young mother faces baby murder charge - unnamed female perpetrator**

*by Liam Phillips*

*WA Today, 8 March 2009*

“A violent domestic argument between two parents has lead to the death of their one-year-old baby, police claim. Inspector George Putland said police were called to a domestic violence report at a house in Dawesville [near Mandurah], south of Perth, at 11.40 last night.

“The house was home to a 21-year-old woman, a 22-year-old man and their baby girl. Inspector Putland said the baby was injured during the fight between the two parents, and died as a result of her injuries. ‘Major Crime and Peel Detectives have charged the 21-year-old mother with murder,’ he said.

The woman will appear in Perth Magistrates Court tomorrow morning. “

*The West Australian, 8 March 2009*

*by Ronan O'Connell and Luke Eliot*

“Neighbours have reported hearing shouting and ‘prolonged screaming’ moments before police arrived at a Dawesville home where a one-year-old girl was allegedly murdered last night. Police were called to the domestic dispute about 11.40pm last night.

“Police said the 21-year-old woman and 22-year-old man were fighting, and, as a result, the baby sustained injuries and died. It is understood the man was holding his baby daughter when the injuries occurred. The couple, who have two children older than the baby, lived at the Dawesville home less than a month, and there are reports that police have been called to the address several times since they moved in.

Neighbours reported hearing shouting followed by prolonged screaming shortly before police arrived.

“Detectives charged the girl's mother with one (count of) murder. She is due to appear in court tomorrow.”

### **Police not told of mum's alleged mashed-potato poison attempt – unnamed female perpetrator from Shorncliffe (Qld.)**

*“The Courier Mail”, 11 July 2009*

*by Tristan Swanwick and Robyn Ironside*

“A woman who allegedly tried to poison her child and husband by lacing their mashed potato with crushed sleeping pills has faced a Brisbane court. This was amid claims police were not informed about the incident.

“The 45-year-old woman from Shorncliffe on Brisbane's northside has been charged with two counts of attempted murder and two counts of stupefying to commit an indictable offence. Police arrested the woman late on Thursday over the alleged crime in April.

“The Brisbane Magistrates Court heard the woman admitted herself to the Princess Alexandra Hospital last month and was being treated for manic depression. She was remanded in custody and the matter is expected to be mentioned in Brisbane Magistrates Court next month.

“The Courier-Mail believes police learned of the alleged offences only by chance after the Department of Child Safety failed to immediately alert detectives. A warrant was served on the department on Thursday to obtain documents relating to the family.

“Despite the apparent breakdown in communication, detectives yesterday said there would be no moves to charge DoCS staff with obstructing police. But the Opposition said the case was typical of the lack of information sharing by Child Safety.

“LNP Child Safety spokesman Jack Dempsey said the department had broken the law by not referring the matter to police. ‘Section 14 (2) of the Child Protection Act clearly states that if the chief executive believes alleged harm to a child involved in the commission of a criminal offence, they must immediately give details of the alleged harm to the police commissioner’, he said. ‘Children's lives are being put at risk because the Department of Child Safety is not passing information on to police.’”

“Department Director-General Linda Apelt said she was unable to comment on a matter before court, but said although child safety officers shared information into suspected child abuse cases, ‘appropriate safeguards’ were in place regarding confidential or sensitive information.

“Police have also complained that Child Safety has been refusing to pass on information about child protection orders. ‘If we find these kids in the street late at night, we'd like to be able to see if they're under protection and return them to where

they should be. But according to community services, we're just not allowed to know because we could embarrass these children in front of their peers,' an officer said."

## **Twin babies found dead – suspected female perpetrator**

*"WA Today", 6 July 2009*

*by Lance White*

"Two babies have been found dead in their Cloverdale home this afternoon and their mother has been admitted to Royal Perth Hospital in a serious condition. The bodies of the twin seven-month-old babies - a boy and a girl - were found by their father when he returned to his Flintlock Court home about 3.30pm. Their mother is being treated for what is believed to be a drug overdose.

"Major Crime squad detectives were called to a house in Flintlock Court, Cloverdale around 3.30pm after a father came home and discovered his partner and two seven-month-old twins unconscious in the house,' Sergeant Greg Lambert said. The babies were rushed to Princess Margaret Hospital but could not be revived. Police have not confirmed reports the twins had drowned.

"The deaths are being treated as a homicide and detectives are waiting to interview the mother. A police forensic team is tonight examining the family's home."

## **(Murder) conviction quashed – Donna Fitchett**

*Bigpond News, 25 June 2009*

"A Melbourne mother convicted of murdering her two sons and sentenced to 24 years in a secure psychiatric facility is to get a fresh trial. Donna Fitchett, then 46, was found to have drugged, smothered and strangled her sons Thomas, 11, and Matthew, nine, at their Balwyn North home in September 2005.

"In July last year, Victorian Supreme Court judge Justice Geoffrey Nettle ordered she serve up to 24 years inside a secure psychiatric facility, with a minimum period of 18 years. Fitchett had pleaded not guilty on the grounds of mental impairment, but a Supreme Court jury rejected her arguments and convicted her of murder.

"On Thursday, the Victorian Court of Appeal quashed her convictions, set aside her sentence and ordered a new trial. In their ruling, Justices Frank Vincent, Peter Buchanan and David Ashley said the trial judge failed to properly instruct the jury about the legal consequences for someone found not guilty due to mental impairment. 'The jury were, in effect, told that there would be legal consequences, but no explanation was given concerning them,' the judges said in their ruling.

"Fitchett was not in the court on Thursday, but David Fitchett, her former husband and the children's father, appeared shocked and broke down after the ruling. He was comforted by supporters.

"A date for the new trial has not been set."

## **Murder-accused babysitter faces court**

*9News, 4 August 2009*

*by Paul Carter*

A babysitter charged with murdering a four-year-old boy during a sleep over in Hobart has appeared in court on Tuesday. Fiona Garth, 37, was taking care of Liam Osborn and his twin brother Aiden on a Friday night sleep over with her six-year-old son on June 26.

Police allege Garth asphyxiated Liam at her Claremont home during the night. She appeared in the Hobart Magistrates Court on Tuesday after being charged on Monday with murdering Liam.

She was not required to enter a plea and can only apply for bail in the Supreme Court. Magistrate Chris Webster remanded Garth in custody until her next court appearance on August 19.

## **Accused of killing boyfriend - Tamie Melehan**

*"Daily Telegraph", 27 December 2008*

"A woman charged with stabbing her boyfriend to death on Christmas Day faced court yesterday charged with his murder. Tamie Melehan, 28, was arrested at the Gosford unit where she allegedly murdered her 30-year old boyfriend.

"Neighbours told police they heard a woman's screams about 11:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve and again about 9 a.m. next morning. It is understood her mother arrived at the unit about 2 p.m. and made the gruesome discovery. She called triple-0 but the Point Clare man, who suffered multiple stab wounds, was dead before an ambulance arrived.

"Melehan did not enter a plea and was remanded in custody until January 5. Police seized several items from the unit but they would not confirm whether these included the alleged murder weapon."

## **Sleeping husband who was allegedly set on fire dies - Rajini Narayan**

*By Elissa Doherty and Chris Pepper*

*"Adelaide Now", 27 December 2008*

"An Unley man whose his wife allegedly torched his genitals while he slept has died. Engineer Narayan, 47, lost his battle to survive at the Royal Adelaide Hospital today, 20 days after sustaining burns to most of his body.

“The incident has now been declared a major crime by police and it is likely his wife Rajini Narayan will face an upgraded charge of manslaughter or murder. Police have alleged Mr Narayan’s wife doused his genitals with methylated spirits then set him on fire around 5.30am on December 7.

“It is believed a major blaze was sparked at their Cleland Ave townhouse when he jumped out of bed and knocked over the bottle of methylated spirits. The fire left a \$1 million damage bill to the couple's home and an adjoining property, and Mr Narayan with burns to 85 per cent of his body. Mrs Narayan and the couple's three children escaped unscathed from the burning house. She has been charged with causing serious harm to her husband, arson and endangering her children.

“Police spokesman Senior Constable Paul Noble yesterday refused to comment on whether police were considering upgrading the charges. ‘The information we have released is all we are going to release today,’ he said. But a court has heard previously it was likely the Director of Public Prosecutions would lay charges of manslaughter or murder if he died.

“It is believed the Narayans only shifted to Adelaide from Canberra a few months ago, after Mr Narayan landed a job working on the Air Warfare Destroyer project. A friend told the Sunday Mail she had visited Mrs Narayan in the Adelaide Women's Prison yesterday, before she had been told of her husband's death. She said she was offering support to her friend over what she said was a "terrible tragedy". ‘She said the pair had held hands and prayed during her visit. She wanted him to live more than anything,’ she said.

“‘I didn't know them very well but I've got to know her now through visiting her in prison. ‘The children are beautiful and it's just a terrible tragedy. ‘There was obviously such pure love there in the family, oh my goodness she's in deep trouble. ‘Her children are so magnificent anyone would be proud of them, they are beautiful upright citizens.”

“Sturt CIB are continuing to investigate the crime. “

## **“Gentle giant” abused by wife, court hears - Danielle Stewart**

*by Belinda Kontominas*

*Sydney Morning Herald, 22 July 2008*

“A Sydney woman accused of the stabbing murder of her husband was prone to ‘aggressive outbursts’ in which she damaged their home and physically assaulted him, the court has been told. Danielle Stewart, 32, is on trial for the murder of her husband, Chaim Kimel, 55, who was stabbed twice in the torso with a knife during an argument in the couple's Rose Bay apartment in August 2006.

“Stewart alleges was acting in self defence and that her husband of almost 2 years had been physically violent towards her. However, Mr Kimel's daughter, Amber Rubenstein, told a Supreme Court jury her father was a "gentle giant" who had been abused by Stuart.

“Mr Kimel had told his daughter that Stewart had bitten him on the thumb and arm and several times had smashed his glasses, the court heard. ‘It became a running joke in the family that he had to get his glasses replaced regularly’, Mrs Rubinstein said. ‘When she became aggressive she would grab them and step on them, mangle them, I don’t know.’ ...

“The court heard that after arguments, Stewart would sometimes delete Mr Kimball’s business emails and important computer file. It was also alleged she once kicked at the front door and smashed a glass panel and window at a previous home in Bellevue Hill when she was refused back in the house after an argument during a holiday in Queensland. Mrs Rubinstein said that during another argument Stewart allegedly used a knife to ‘slash’ at a timber door....

### **Woman left mother to be eaten alive by maggots, court told - Mary Eve Pyrcsak**

*“The Canberra Times”, 2 May 2009*

*AAP*

“A Melbourne woman allowed her mother to be eaten alive by maggots and left her dying on the floor surrounded by her own waste, a court has heard. Kateryna Pyrcsak’s St Albans house allegedly smelled like a ‘rotting corpse’ when she was discovered by paramedics lying on her kitchen floor with gangrenous legs on November 10 last year.

“Police allege the 72-year-old’s right leg was gangrenous from knee to foot and was being eaten by maggots and her body was covered in ulcers.

“Ms Pyrcsak was taken to the Western General Hospital but died from multiple organ failure and septicaemia later that night. On Friday, her daughter and sole carer Mary Eve Pyrcsak, 49, fronted the Melbourne Magistrates Court charged with negligently killing her mother. Pyrcsak allegedly told police she did not call an ambulance for several weeks because she feared it would cost her \$800.

“Detective Senior Constable Victor Anastadiadis told Pyrcsak’s bail hearing her mother’s house smelt “like a rotting corpse’ and was littered with cans of fly spray and air freshener. Detective Senior Constable Anastadiadis also alleged Ms Pyrcsak was surrounded by ‘a number of litres of human faeces’ when discovered. He strongly opposed bail.

“Magistrate Philip Goldberg granted Pyrcsak bail on conditions including not contacting prosecution witnesses. “



## **Woman jailed for torturing, killing veteran - Nese Arkan**

*The Canberra Times, 21 December, 2002*

AAP

“Melbourne: a woman who cut off part of the penis of an 81-year-old World War II veteran as she cold-heartedly tortured him to death was jailed yesterday for 21 years.

“In ordering her to serve a minimum non parole term of 17 years, Victorian Supreme Court Justice Geoffrey Mittal said that Nese Arkan, 32 "appears not to have the slightest qualms about her actions". The partner in the murder, Peter Andrakakos, 25, was jailed for 19 years with a minimum of 16 years. The judge said the pair had subjected Keith Herman to a “vicious and sustained attack, first by kicking and bashing him and then with a knife in ways which most civilised human beings could not begin to imagine”.

“The couple were high on drugs when, on September 22 last year, they decided to break into Mr Herman's home in suburban McKinnon. Arkan, a prostitute and former escort agency worker, had once had a relationship with Mr Herman, a widower and former air force navigator whom the judge said was left "profoundly lonely" after losing his wife of 50 years in 1997.

“Mr Herman, bound and blindfolded, was interrogated, tortured and mutilated over four hours as Arkan and Andrakakos, of North Clayton, tried to prise from him the whereabouts of jewellery and other valuables. Arkan poked out one of Mr Herman's eyes with a knife and cut off part of his penis while he was still alive. She also used the knife handle to pummel Mr Herman around the face and head. The couple kicked Mr Herman on the head and body causing a brain hemorrhage, severe bruising and a rib fracture.

“The judge said Arkan and Andrakakos had caused the frail old man excruciating pain and terror, killing him before they could get him to reveal where he kept his valuables. Mr Herman died from his injuries or from a heart attack brought on by the effect of injuries. Arkan and Andrakakos ransacked the house, torched it, then drove off in one of Mr Herman's cars.

“When asked by police what was going through her mind, Arkan said that she just wanted Mr Herman to suffer. “

## **“Mothers, wives, and killers” - Katherine Knight**

*“Sunday Telegraph”, 5 July 2009*

“They're known as the “black widows” – the women behind bars for some of (NSW's) most unspeakable killings. The victims were their husbands or their partners and, in a surprising number of cases the bodies were mutilated after death.

“Among the most notorious of the black widows is Katherine Knight, a 52 year-old former abattoir worker who used her boning skills to dismember her husband’s body and cook parts of it in the kitchen of the home they had shared.

“In February 2000, Knight stabbed her de facto husband John Price to death at the home they shared at Aberdeen in the Hunter Valley. The mother of four skinned his body like an animal, hanging his remains from a meat hook in the living room. She then boiled his head in a pot and served baked pieces of his body with vegetables and gravy to his two adult children

### **- Kathy Yeo**

*“Sunday Telegraph”, 5 July 2009*

“In another infamous case, nurse Kathy Yeo shot her former lover and dismembered his body at the couple’s Lilyfield unit ...

“Yeo is serving an 18 year sentence for the murder of her boyfriend, Christopher Mark Dorrian. Police found Mr Dorrian’s head in a bag dumped in the Cooks River at Marrickville. “

### **- Joyce Mary Chant**

*“Sunday Telegraph”, 5 July 2009*

“Last week, Revesby woman Joyce Mary Chant became the latest addition to the list. She admitted shooting dead her husband, chopping up his body with an axe and leaving his body parts at locations across NSW.

“After a jury failed to reach a verdict at her murder trial in April (2009), Chant pleaded guilty to manslaughter and the Crown accepted her plea to the lesser offence on the grounds of provocation. According to the agreed facts, the violent husband had threatened her with his rifle, causing the 52-year old to fear for her life. “

### **- Andrea Rix**

*“Sunday Telegraph”, 5 July 2009*

“Andrea Rix, 33, was sentenced to a minimum of eight years in prison for conspiring with her alleged lover Terence Joseph Sealey to murder her husband Joe Rix in 2007. Mr Rix was shot with his own shot gun at his farm at Bogan Gate, near Parkes. His wife provided Sealey with the gun to kill her husband. Sealy is serving a minimum of 5 and a half years jail for his part.

“According to the most recent inmate census undertaken by the NSW Department of Corrective Services, 38 women prisoners around the State are serving sentences for murder. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures, compiled for the Sunday Telegraph growth, suggest that as many as one third of those women were responsible for killing their husbands, boyfriends or former partners. “

## **“Possessed” woman killed father: court - Daniela Beltrame**

*Nine News, 3 February 2009*

*by Margaret Scheikowski*

“A woman seemed ‘possessed’ as she held a pillow over her father's face, after restraining him to his bed with cling wrap, her daughter has told a Sydney jury. Romina Beltrame said her mother said, ‘Help me, help me, he won’t die, he is a demon.’ Ms Beltrame said her mother remonstrated with her when she started to free him saying: ‘What are you doing, it has taken me hours to Glad Wrap him’.

“The 29 year-old receptionist was giving evidence on Tuesday at the New South Wales Supreme Court trial of her 55 year-old mother, Daniela Beltrame. She has pleaded not guilty to murdering her frail then-70-year old father Ederino Beltrame in the early hours of April 28, 2001 at his Canley Heights home in Sydney's west.

“In the Crown’s opening address, prosecutor Elizabeth Wilkins, SC, said Beltrame was motivated by greed combined with “some deep bitterness and resentment” towards her father. She said Beltrame wanted to be the sole inheritor of her father's estate and forged his will. Beltrame also resented her father's closeness to her adopted brother, John, despite his being in jail for killing a woman, Miss Wilkins said.

“Romana Beltrame broke down while giving evidence about going to her grandfather's bedroom, after hearing her mother scream. ‘I saw mum kneeling on top of my grandfather,’ she said. ‘She had a pillow on his face and she was suffocating him.’ “

24 July 2009