

WORLD NEWS

# Australian police probe why man who stabbed 6 people to death in a Sydney mall targeted women



Flags fly at half-staff as Australians mourn victims of stabbings attacks at Sydney shopping center

Photos 8

BY ROD MCGUIRK  
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MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australian police are examining why a lone assailant who stabbed six people to death in a busy Sydney shopping mall and injured more than a dozen others targeted women while avoiding men, a police commissioner said on Monday. The killer's father blamed his son's frustration at not having a girlfriend.

Police shot and killed the homeless assailant, Joel Cauchi, during his knife attack in the Westfield Bondi Junction mall on Saturday near world-famous Bondi Beach.

Police have ruled out terrorism and said the 40-year-old had a history of mental illness.

New South Wales state Police Commissioner Karen Webb said detectives would question Cauchi's family in a bid to determine his motive. CCTV footage from the mall showed Cauchi targeted women with the 30 centimeter knife.

"The videos speak for themselves, don't they? And that's certainly a line of inquiry for us," Webb said.

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"It's obvious to me, it's obvious to detectives that that seems to be an area of interest: that the offender had focused on women and avoided the men," Webb added.

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AP AUDIO: Australian police probe why man who stabbed 6 people to death in a Sydney mall targeted women.  
AP correspondent Charles de Ledesma reports five women and a man died in Saturday's Sydney stabbing rampage.

The attacker's father, Andrew Cauchi, said he knew why his son, who suffered from schizophrenia, had targeted women.

"Because he wanted a girlfriend and he's got no social skills and he was frustrated out of his brain," the visibly distraught 76-year-old told reporters outside his home in Toowoomba in Queensland state, an 870-kilometer (540-mile) drive across the New South Wales border from Sydney.

"He's my son, and I'm loving a monster. To you, he's a monster. To me, he was a very sick boy. Believe me, he was a very sick boy," the father added.

The only male killed was Faraz Tahir, a Pakistani refugee who worked at the mall as a security guard. Tahir had not been armed.



People look as the Sydney Opera House is illuminated with a black ribbon Monday, April 15, 2024, as part of the national day of mourning following the stabbing deaths at a shopping mall in Sydney's East on Saturday. (AP Photo/Mark Baker)

Webb said most of the 12 victims who survived their wounds were also women.

The evidence will be provided to a coroner to report on the circumstances of the deaths.

Webb expected the coroner would also address the question of whether security guards at the mall, which is one of Australia's largest, should be armed.

The families of two victims based overseas had been advised of their deaths, police said. Those victims are Tahir, 30, from Pakistan, and Yixuan Cheng, 27, from China. Also killed were Jade Young, 47; Dawn Singleton, 25; Pikria Darchia, 55; and Ashlee Good, 38.

Eight victims who survived their injuries remained in hospitals on Monday, including Good's 9-month-old daughter. The baby's condition improved overnight Sunday from critical to serious, health authorities said.

The conditions of the other seven ranged from critical to stable.

Andrew Cauchi said his son had a "fascination with knives." The father took five U.S. military combat knives from his son while they were both living in the Toowoomba family home last year for fear they would be used for violence.

The father said his son had become angry and called police, accusing the father of theft. The knives were given to a friend for safekeeping.



A girl and a woman place flowers as a tribute near a crime scene at Bondi Junction in Sydney, Monday, April 15, 2024, after several people were stabbed to death at a shopping mall on April 13. (AP Photo/Mark Baker)

"I told the police my son had schizophrenia and I'm worried for myself," Andrew Cauchi said.

"I said to my mate, 'Why do I feel I'm going to be killed in my own house by my own son with a U.S. combat knife?'" he added.

The killer's mother, Michele Cauchi, said his rampage was the "absolute worst nightmare" of any parent of a mentally ill child.

Flags on government buildings around Australia flew at half-staff on Monday as a day of national mourning was declared to honor the victims. A black ribbon appeared on the sails of the Sydney Opera House on Monday night as part of a light display.

Police had given control of the seven-story crime scene back to the mall operators on Sunday night, but a decision has yet to be announced on when it will reopen for business.

The police officer who has been credited with saving many lives by shooting Cauchi dead, Insp. Amy Scott, will be interviewed by detectives on Tuesday.

AP

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