

## Teenage deaths in Athens and Melbourne: A comparison

Cam Smith writes:

*“Police murdered a 15 year-old kid in Northcote last night,”* read the text message, *“Come to Northcote police station. Crew heading there now. Demand justice. F — k the bastards.”*

In the carpark outside the police station, a group of young radical types stood in a huddle, discussing the events of the previous night. Spread throughout the carpark, the media were identifiable by their obscure gang patches, 7, 9, 10.

*“Do you think it’ll go Greek?”* one anarchist asked me. *“I don’t think so,”* I replied, *“This is Northcote, not Exarchia.”*

And yet, despite my pithy response in the damp patch of asphalt between Northcote Plaza and All Nations Park, the question persisted throughout the day — on radio, on blogs, on the newspaper websites... even my mum asked me: *Why does nobody listen to me?*

The similarity was striking, I suppose. Only five days after Athenian police had gunned down a 15-year-old boy, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, police in the third-largest Greek city in the world had shot dead another 15-year-old boy, Tyler Cassidy.

The key is in the contrast:

- In Northcote, the police [claim to have] had no choice.
- In Athens, eyewitnesses describe the police initiating conflict by provoking the youths.
- In Northcote, the police tried to negotiate, before turning to capsicum foam, then resorting to their sidearms.
- In Athens, eyewitnesses describe the police officer who fired the shots as having exposed his genitals just prior to executing Alexandros.
- In Athens, the police officer was a member of a [neo-Nazi gang](#).

There is contrast in the response too: While anarchists in Greece [reported](#) on goings-on there in an almost poetic manner, on [4Chan](#), [Anonymous](#) amused itself by photo shopping pictures of knives into Cassidy’s hands and bombarding a tribute MySpace with abuse (it has since

been taken down).

While Greece burned, hundreds of people around the world expressed solidarity (some then had riots of their own). In Melbourne, Cassidy was mentioned at a solidarity vigil attended by 30 well-soaked bleeding hearts outside the Greek consulate on Saturday. On Sunday afternoon, two dodgy looking blokes in a car tried to organise a rally outside the Northcote police station. Nobody showed up.

Cassidy's juvenile politics makes him easy to hate, but while the [Southern Cross Soldiers](#) are a bit of a nasty bunch, being a d-ckhead is not yet a capital crime. Alexandros Grigoropoulos' death will be long remembered for the actions it initiated.

Cassidy's death will fall down the memory hole—a stupid, messed-up kid on a suicide mission. He deserves better—he should be remembered as the kid whose death prompted increased funding to Crisis Assessment Teams and improvements to police training.

Tyler Cassidy should be remembered as the last needless police death in Victoria. He won't be, but he should.