

For the past eleven years, I have been a prominent anti-discrimination activist. I jumped headlong into the scene when a number of my former school mates bragged about attending the Cronulla Riots.

I have engaged in various forms of activism but my most wave-causing project was a website called TheAntiBogan where myself and a few friends screenshot and published public tweets and Facebook comments that were racist, misogynistic, homophobic and generally discriminatory. People were quite happy to make public posts that stated that they were looking forward to 'bashing some Pakis', 'raping some loose sluts', 'killing some stinky Indians', 'bombing some mosques', 'stabbing some Abos', 'beating some poofs' etc.

Because the screenshots were of public comments on social media, the website was credible and remained online for many years. Often, employers and concerned members of the public were so offended that they took steps to ensure that the offenders were notified and on occasion the result was a termination of employment.

Because of this, I was a regular recipient of death threats and threats to my family and friends. I had to move house three times, become a silent elector, change mobile numbers several times and I applied for three different AVOs. I had earned many enemies who numbered in the hundreds.

I featured in an SBS documentary and was regularly interviewed in media including major television networks and publishing corporations such as Fairfax and Newscorp. I was on SBS Insight and was a keynote speaker at the Australian Human Rights Commission, Vibewire, the Paramasala Festival and the NSW Reconciliation Council.

When neo-Nazis established the fact that I was a school teacher, I became the subject of daily defamatory Internet memes and a plethora of fake Alex Gollan profiles were established. The creators of these fake profiles would take to various social media pages and make comments to establish that I was a pedophile. The school/s I taught at and the NSW Department of Education were contacted so often by anonymous nationalists calling for my sacking on the grounds that I was a pedophile/anarchist/communist/socialist etc that they took the step of deleting all complaints made about me by persons who refused to supply their real name/contact information.

In 2010, one of the many fake Alex Gollan Facebook profiles used the name of the school I taught at as a search term and found many students who were attending the school. The profile added these students and sent them provocative and inappropriate private messages. When I told the police they did not care in the slightest. It wasn't until I informed my principal and the media who then contacted the police that the matter was addressed. It reached detective level at Redfern LAC and then the investigating detective disappeared and I never heard from the precinct again. <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/evil-fiction-teacher-a-target-of-fake-facebook-profile-20110805-1iefm.html>

I endured years and years of abuse and defamation and I attended various police stations in NSW and Victoria trying to get assistance on the grounds that I was receiving death threats, that my school was being contacted, that I was receiving regular unsolicited contact, that my identity was being duplicated, that I was being slandered and defamed, that I was being labeled a pedophile and that my family and friends were being targeted.

I had given police USBs and printouts on a number of occasions but I was never contacted by any officer or detective in regards to any of my approaches. This is despite racking up 12 case files over around 25 visits to various stations over around 7-8 years. Often I would be asked by the attending officer if I had informed police of the situation and if I replied in the affirmative, they told me that I needed to await the outcome of events before being able to open new files. Additionally, I would save screenshots of unsolicited contact and defamation along with information on the antagonists such as mobile numbers, addresses and IP addresses into a Dropbox file. It wasn't until 2015 when I was assisting a detective in Victoria who was investigating

similar attacks on a teacher at the alleged hands of one of the people I had long accused that I learned that police are not able to access the Dropbox website at any police station due to it being a blocked website (security purposes). Additionally, police officers were restricted from accessing Dropbox files at their homes due to the sensitive and private nature of the files. I was never told this by any officer I spoke with.

In 2015, after spending \$900 to subpoena all of my case files, I learned that police had dismissed most of my claims due to lack of evidence, the expensive and often fruitless endeavours to use 'IASK' to identify perpetrators of identity theft and online crime and/or hearsay.

I was not the only person to suffer in this way. Several other people who had either campaigned with me or worked with me at Australians Against Racism & Discrimination and/or TheAntiBogan were receiving unsolicited contact and enduring regular defamation attacks.

In October 2014, I was arrested for indecently communicating with a minor using the Internet. At that point in time, the two detectives informed me that I would not be charged as the alleged conversation was considered inappropriate but not indecent. Police took all of my computers, storage drives, iPads and my mobile phone and had them forensically examined over the course of around 10-12 months. All were clean, except four videos which had been downloaded from public file-sharing websites YouTube and Youku were found. These files were saved onto the desktop of my non-password-protected laptop into a folder labeled 'to report'. These files were less than a week old at the time of my arrest and my computer was four years old. As mentioned earlier, I would often go to police with whatever evidence I could save into Dropbox or USB.

Police decided to lay 16 different charges and the media (TV, radio, print) had a field day. They camped outside my house for a day and a half and harassed my teacher colleagues for days. They harassed my neighbours for sit-down interviews. The police have spent just under 2 years trying to find evidence on me using methods that I am not aware of. They have not found anything and despite attending court on five different occasions (while I provided lawyers at my own expense), they have asked for delay after delay and now have dropped all charges except two.

I cannot begin to estimate how much money the NSW Police Force has spent investigating me, considering there have been two or three detectives, two or three computer forensic scientists and other officers over the course of nearly two years.

I am charged with communicating indecently with a minor using the Internet and it is my lawyer's suggestion that I plead guilty to this charge as I do not have adequate evidence to fight it. I admit that I have approved friend requests from former students and I have learned in the most painful of ways the value of not using social media ever again.

I am also charged with possession of four YouTube videos, each around 30s - 2min in length. These have been labeled by police as 'child abuse material', level one (lowest). Again, my lawyer has suggested that I plead guilty to this charge as police have not recorded that I have provided them with any evidence to support my contextual argument. I have my reasons for having these in my possession and in no way did I make any attempt to hide these files or stop short of telling police that I was being defamed as a pedophile and that I was regularly receiving unsolicited contact from online trolls. While I have my own position on this charge, I am accepting the responsibility of it and have similarly learned in a very painful way that it was not the best approach.

I do wish that I had done things differently over the past decade and my priorities in life have certainly changed. When my son grows up, I will be teaching him that fighting for what he thinks is right may come at a significant price and to tread with extreme care. I have personally been given what I believe to be contradictory advice from police over the past decade from a force that admittedly doesn't really know how to deal with cyber crime. Some officers have told me to document and screenshot everything, some have told me to

delete/block/report on every occasion. Some have told me that there is nothing I can do and some have told me that they will work hard to find my anonymous antagonists.

Since October 2014, I have been given a harsh trial by media and had journalists share and publicise my home address (private from electoral roll) and contact details to their colleagues. I have lost my job and spent over \$60,000 on legal assistance, despite not even going to trial. I have been mistreated by the NSW Department of Education who I know have wanted me to quit. I did eventually quit in May of this year and I have been prevented from gaining any other form of employment from the fact that a routine police-check says that I have a pending matter. I have been diagnosed with anxiety and depression and regardless of the outcome of this whole debacle, I will not have the confidence to return to any form of child-related work. I have refused to seek welfare payments as I want to earn my way, and this has meant that I have been unable to meet mortgage commitments and I have therefore sold my home.

Alex Gollan